



Colonel Scotland.

The
LONDON CAGE

by

Lt. Col. A. P. Scotland, O.B.E.



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Chapter One

FROM END TO BEGINNING

AMONG the minor skills I have acquired during fifty years of intelligence and security work for Britain is a capacity for remaining unsurprised in the face of startling events, encounters, personalities or predicaments.

It was somewhat shaken, however, one February day of 1947 when I opened the newspapers to learn that the world was declaiming me not only "BRITAIN'S MASTER SPY", but also "SCOTLAND OF THE WEHRMACHT"; and indeed "M.I.5 COLONEL ON NAZI GENERAL STAFF"; not to mention "MAN WHO KNEW THE GERMAN BATTLE ORDER".

Roma, my wife, who still lived in the Buckinghamshire village of Bourne End where she had done her war work in a local munitions factory, was at once besieged by correspondents digging for further gems in the story of her "mystery man" husband. And far away in Venice, where I was attending the war crimes trial of the German Field Marshal, Albert Kesselring, the wires started humming with fresh accounts of my exploits as a so-called "senior staff officer" of the German Army, who appeared to have flitted courageously back and forth between war-torn Europe and the War Office in Whitehall carrying despatch cases jammed with Hitler's tactical secrets. During the brief and, so to speak, balmy spells of wartime leisure which I was reported to have spent in England, I would be resting in my Thames-side garden, silent, thoughtful and for ever mysterious, as befitted the tight-lipped secret agent who seemed to have lived more dangerously than any man before him.

For myself, after a lifetime of activity in which I had known some decidedly narrow escapes, intriguing experiences and experiences of intrigue, I was frankly embarrassed by these colourful revelations travelling through the headlines of Europe and America; tales that were disclosed when I innocently

murmured the word "Yes" in the ancient courtroom along the Grand Canal at Venice.

Kesselring, former supreme commander of German troops in Italy, was then standing trial on charges of "barbarous reprisals" against the Italian populace. As chief officer of the War Crimes Investigation Unit I had questioned him during 1946 when he was brought to London District Cage, our Kensington headquarters; and I had formed the private opinion that Albert Kesselring, possessing an authority that was far from supreme, had not been responsible for the brutalities of which he was now accused.¹

In the British military court at Venice, on a Wednesday morning of February 1947, I was giving evidence concerning certain vital documents which dealt with Kesselring's command in Italy. The tall, genial, beefy English prosecutor, Colonel Richard Halse, our chief counsel, was addressing me.

"Now, Colonel Scotland," he began, "I am going to ask you some questions about the German Army. . . ." He went on to demand of me whether I knew who was the German plenipotentiary in Italy during the war.

At this, up jumped Dr. Hans Laternser, a small, highly-strung and impulsive German lawyer who was defending Kesselring.

"I object to the question," he cried, his voice full of irritation, "and to any answer to it. The witness was never in the German Army, and cannot give evidence about its organisation."

Laternser slumped back on his seat. There was a pause before Halse spoke. When he did, the courtroom atmosphere became suddenly charged with tension.

"Colonel Scotland—were you ever in the German Army?" he asked.

It took me four or five seconds to answer, during which I felt a rapid inward tussle about how much explicit detail my reply should convey. Finally, I chose the path of truthful brevity.

"Yes," I said.

The courtroom, as they say, gasped; and the plainest look of astonishment was seen on the face of little Laternser.

¹ The detailed story of these crimes and of Kesselring's trial is told in Chapter XIII.

Halse spoke again, evenly. "Was information on the organisation of the German Army your function during the war?" he asked.

"Yes," I repeated. And again the courtroom buzzed. Then, having completed my evidence, I stood down.

When we left the court that afternoon I observed that I was the centre of a somewhat sensational interest among reporters of many nationalities. Within a few days their stories had ripped through Western Europe, across to the Argentine, into Canada, back to Germany and Scandinavia. Before long, I was the man who had been decorated by Hitler; had served on the German General Staff "as and when British Intelligence pleased"; and was in the habit of disappearing from England for weeks at a time, swapping British for Nazi uniform and switching identities as I shuffled across the Channel.

From Kesselring himself I learned that he was now under the impression I had commanded a German division among his own forces. "Dammit, I thought I knew all my commanders, but I don't remember *you*," Kesselring said to me when I interviewed him later in prison.

It was a piquant situation in which to find myself.

But what was the truth, it may be asked, about this saga of Scotland, the Master Spy? Was it perhaps a leg-pull? Or could there be so much smoke without fire?

The fact was that I had been fortunate enough to have at my fingertips more of the detail of German activity and military organisation than many German generals. I had been able to astound many a Nazi officer with information that he did not dream could be in the possession of any Englishman. My knowledge of the German forces, of the German supply situation, of the German soldier's habits, language, even his dialects and slang, appeared to be based—could only be based—upon first-hand experience. Thus the position when, in my middle sixties, still at work, I reflected on the thousand-and-one trails I had followed during a lengthy and at times adventurous career.

The story of "intelligence" I am about to tell, however, has its real beginnings not in the days of electronic warfare and miniature cameras masquerading as cigarette lighters; not in the age of aircraft, tank or submarine; not against any

background of modern armoured vehicles. Even the motor car itself was barely on show when first I began to savour this idea of "intelligence" as a way of life, which is precisely what it became.

For the real initiation, I look back to the heyday of King Edward VII, the Boer War and the ragtime army of a young man called Smuts; to South-West Africa in the early nineteenth-hundreds. And when, after the Second World War, my rôle was concerned with the hauling of Nazi criminals to justice, I knew that my labours were still drawing upon the lessons of an apprenticeship begun at the age of twenty-one—nearly fifty years back.

Chapter Two

BUSHLAND INTELLIGENCE SCHOOL

THERE is nothing especially dramatic (contrary to popular opinion) about the operations of a spy. Spies, indeed, are often as not the mere messenger boys of a nation's secret services. If they are caught red-handed, their work may have dramatic enough results, but many of the routine duties of espionage add up to a merely dull and rather undramatic business, whether photographing a document, then posting it to some foreign power, filching a blueprint or a briefcase of official secrets, or passing a bit of information to the higher-ups. For sheer excitement and danger in the performance, routine spying often compares unfavourably with even a good fast football game. But pure *intelligence* is a different story. Discovering what *is* the thing you should pay a spy to ferret out for you—that is among the more vital, fascinating long-term tasks of true security work.

This is no steady job with a pay packet arriving at the end of the month. Properly pursued, it is a lifetime hobby, sometimes a risky one, sometimes involving prodigious feats of memory and concentration, and always demanding the most patient study of "trends" in international, military, strategic and economic affairs.

Of all this, however, I had only a glimmering in those far-off years, 1904 to 1907, when my apprenticeship in intelligence began. On a certain dry, dusty, blazing afternoon in what was then the German part of South Africa, the glimmer began to glow more brightly when a British liaison officer drew me aside, and said softly: "We've heard all about you, Scotland—you're doing a good job. Learn all you can about the German Army, and one day you will be a valuable man to your country."

That meeting took place under the noses of German troops at Ramonsdrift, on the Orange River. The speaker was a

moustached, ruddy-cheeked major, an astute soldier named Wade, of the Lancashire Fusiliers.

Learn all you can . . . one day you will be valuable to your country. . . .

I was then twenty-two years old. His words, the most encouraging I had heard since leaving the shores of Britain, were to remain in my memory for the rest of my life.

By this time I had been in South-West Africa for a year or so, though this was not my first taste of wandering abroad. After leaving school at fourteen, stepping into the commercial world as a Mincing Lane tea merchant's office boy, switching to the provision trade and working as a clerk, I sailed for Australia when I was seventeen and stayed there about a year.

Then, back to England, to my job in the London grocery business of John Sainsbury, where I had been dubbed "Scottie the Scot". In fact, both my parents were Scots, from Perthshire, and my father a railway engineer. I was the middle product of their substantial family of nine, three girls, six boys. Perhaps because I had a variety of uncles, aunts and other relatives living abroad, my mind was focussed from an early age on the notion of a career overseas, and before I was twenty this compulsive travel urge was again asserting itself.

The idea of choosing South Africa started with a pugnacious feeling that I would like to get into the thick of the Boer War, and so, somewhat against my mother's wishes, I sailed from England fit and ready for the fray. One of my brothers was already out there, a fighting soldier, and he had promised to get me into his unit.

My arrival in the sunny south was plain anti-climax; by the time I reached Cape Colony, the war had ended and there was nothing for it but to resume, in a new land, the unexciting pursuits of a civilian clerk. I could not then know that before long these activities would be transformed into considerable adventure.

After a short spell with an insurance company, I went to work once more in the grocery and provisions trade, representing a busy, thriving enterprise known as S.A.T.—South African Territories, Ltd.—and living in the small township of Ramonsdrift, a remote spot near the old river-line border

between Cape Colony and German South-West Africa. The rangy desert bushland of the south, among the Hottentots and Hereros, the Klipkaffir, the Bondel and Namaqua natives—and among the Germans—was my trading map. And as the youthful manager of this hot territory I travelled mostly on horseback.

Soon I was making rapid progress in overcoming the first of my problems—language. Having started with only a few words of German I had to learn rapidly in a place where only German and Cape Dutch were heard from most of the inhabitants; and later, when my headquarters were shifted to the larger town of Warmbad, German had to be listened to and spoken from morning till night.

The German forces, in fact, were now my chief customers for the biscuits, canned foods, soft drinks and similar goods delivered by my company from Cape Town. Business was booming, and it was not long before supply problems began to provide headaches with which my still limited German was unable to cope. "Learn to speak German fluently, Schottland," said the company commandant, the burly Hans Heinrich von Quitzow, "and there will be opportunities for you." This much was certain: the opportunities that later accompanied my mastery of the language were not altogether what von Quitzow intended.

The close of the Boer War was not the end of conflict in South Africa, for in 1903 began the native uprisings which were to involve the Hottentots and the Germans for more than four hard years.

One day, von Quitzow came to me with a proposition. The bulky cases of provisions we supplied to his troops—the *Liebesgaben* or "comforts" parcels—had to be distributed to the soldiers by a specially-appointed officer at a time when German manpower was sorely strained. Von Quitzow's proposal was that I should become that officer, signing up with the garrison force as a German soldier.

"You ought to be carrying a rifle in case we are attacked. You cannot have a rifle unless you are in German uniform, and you cannot wear uniform unless you are on my roll," he said.

He looked at me steadily, then asked: "What about it, Schottland?"

Nowadays, I sometimes wonder what paths I might have trod had I turned down that intriguing idea of joining the German Army. As it was, I returned his stare and surprised him by merely asking: "What rank would I have?"

He answered that I would be a war volunteer, or *Kriegsfreiwilliger*, but that there in Ramonsdrift I could also have officers' mess status. He had already prepared the official form for my signature, and waited patiently while I glanced over the paper and weighed the pros and cons. I surprised even myself by the speed and outward calm of my decision.

"Very well, then, I'll join up," I told him, as if putting on German uniform were the most natural thing in the world for a young and patriotic Scotsman.

So it was that Alexander Paterson Scotland became Schottland, the *Herr Liebesgaben* officer in the German Army of 1904. I was still the local manager of S.A.T., but since most of our business was with the forces under von Quitzow's command, my civilian operations were made somewhat more efficient in my new rôle as one of his men.

I drew my rifle and kit as a member of the *Kaiserliche Schutz Truppe*. I handed out the sweets, biscuits, non-alcoholic drinks and small quantities of delicatessen in tins to the sick or convalescent and to the garrison troops returning from their dusty desert treks. I went on perfecting my German—and I went on studying the Germans.

War between African and German was raging over a wide area by the end of 1904. Large-scale reinforcements were being planned for our Ramonsdrift garrison, and my supplies were increased to provide for the needs of five thousand men.

It was a clever war on the part of the Hottentots, who inflicted severe losses on the German forces and, with quite a few hundred crack shots among the native tribes, every sortie and patrol ride became a dangerous undertaking. At one point, when the pressure for supplies was strong, I was organising five-ton wagons, two-ton mule carts and even small ox carts on terrible trips through sixty miles of deep desert and with only a single water-hole along the route. On another occasion, we

manhandled sacks and cases, and hundreds of oxen for the fresh meat supply, along with goats and sheep, over a punishing land-and-river journey under the broiling sun with temperatures of 105 in the shade.

After taking part in several battles I was glad of the restful opportunity offered by a trip to Cape Town, where I was to arrange for the restocking of our supplies at Ramonsdrift and Warmbad.

Into my hotel one afternoon came an unexpected order: "The Prime Minister wants to see you at Government House tomorrow at 11 o'clock." At that time the Premier of Cape Colony was Dr. L. S. Jameson, known as "Dr. Jim". Next day, off I went to Government House, together with my company chairman.

Jameson talked about our business for a while, then put some searching questions about how I thought the war was going, my activities in Ramonsdrift, and my relationship with the Germans.

He listened closely to my detailed replies, and then said: "I've decided to make you the General Manager, unpaid, of the Cape Government trading post at Ramonsdrift. You will be the authority for deciding on permits for the goods allowed to cross the Orange River. As an officer of my department, you will be responsible only to me."

The effect of this honourable, even if honorary, appointment was to add considerably to my staff; but, far more important, it added to my personal standing with the Germans, as well as with the British police in Africa. I was also becoming well known to the natives and their leaders, and by the end of the war found myself in the interesting position of being trusted in all four camps—Government, native, British, German. When, on the direct orders of the Kaiser, terms were sought for a cease-fire, I was given the task of tracking down the Hottentot leader, Johannes Christian, to arrange for the peace talks that followed. Every day my activities were bringing me into contact with German habits and expressions which were to become extremely handy in both the First and Second World Wars, confounding many an unsuspecting prisoner in the days when interrogation was my function.

At all events, when the war against the natives was over, so ended my service in the German Army. I continued as manager of our company, working in various centres, and still keeping close to the German community. I had been a friend of the German soldier, having fought alongside him, had been awarded the Order of the Red Eagle for my services, and was making the acquaintance of many of their leaders, including, later, the celebrated Dr. Schacht, the financial wizard who became Germany's colonial minister shortly before the outbreak of war in Europe.

No one suspected, or at least appeared to suspect, that, apart from keeping my eye on German manpower information, on the weapons and equipment they were developing, on their tactics, on their newly-organised system of call-up by age groups, and on a score of equally significant facts or trends, I was also unofficially reporting, before the outbreak of the First World War, to the head of Britain's Intelligence Service in Cape Town, and to General Smuts' agents on their periodic visits to me in my bushland commercial headquarters. By 1909, when I was twenty-seven years old, the seed of intelligence was firmly planted and my "hobby", so to speak, was beginning to bear fruit.

I do not know what first led the Germans into half-suspecting that their colleague, "Schottland", might not be all he seemed to be. When I walked through the ordnance depôt at Keetmanshoop one day and took photographs of the secret new guns delivered from Germany, some officer or NCO perhaps made a mental note that my movements might profitably be watched. When I paid my visits to Cape Town, some agent may have observed that my calls were not confined to the head office of the company. Whatever it was, there came a time when I realised that an altogether new wariness was vital for my comfort and safety.

The first hint that any German might be wondering about the direction of my loyalties came one day when I was working and living in Keetmanshoop.

It started with an invitation to the queerest, heaviest session of beer and whisky drinking I have ever witnessed. From the regimental sergeant-major had come the request: "Will Herr

Schottland please attend at the sergeants' mess tonight for dinner?" It was a distinctly odd suggestion. Why, I wondered, should the NCOs want me to dine with them? Often enough I had dined with the officers, but never in the sergeants' mess. I was puzzled, but decided it would be wise to go.

At seven-thirty that evening I ambled down the road to the big stone building behind a five-foot wall surrounding the military quarters, and into the large room which was the NCOs' mess hall, there to be greeted by their President, who was a sergeant-major, and by the senior sergeant.

Straight away I saw that a long table was set for some thirty men. Bottles of beer, in clusters of four, were laid at each place. I began to suspect the significance of it all, and after three or four short drinks at the bar, in the company of a dozen sergeants and the President, I was certain. This was to be one of their familiar brawling parties. I had seen it happen before, in an officers' mess where Bavarians and Wurtembergers were having a farewell celebration; where the drink flowed thick and fast; where the old Prussian-versus-South German hatreds floated to the surface—to end in a pitched battle, with the jagged edges of broken bottles and glasses as the chief weapons. It was an ugly sight, and the prospect now facing me was no less ugly.

Somewhat doubtfully, I reassured myself with the thought that I was fit and hard, and possessed as good a straight left as any of my companions. I knew that in this type of brawl one might even get killed, but I knew also that there was no getting out of it. Three questions still troubled me: What was it all about? Who was supplying the funds for the liquor? And why did the Germans want *me* in attendance?

Soon we were all seated at the long table, where I was allotted a place in the centre, facing the President, whom I knew quite well, and next to the senior sergeant whose job, it seemed, was to ensure that I had plenty to drink.

It was nearly ten o'clock when the meal was disposed of, the rowdy songs between courses had been sung and the liberal supplies of beer guzzled, with a devastating effect on most of the party. Several who sat near me persistently tried to force more and more drink upon me, usually with the old German

toasting call of "Prosit Herr Schottland" or "Prosit Herr Engländer". Whenever they played this little charade I saw to it that I did not drink until they had had their fill.

The President and I were soon the only pair of comparatively sober men in the company, but then the pressure was put on. Suddenly, the senior sergeant rose, stood behind my chair and grabbed me somewhat savagely, pinning my arms.

He bawled to his friends: "What's the matter? This Engländer can drink more beer than we can. Let's put some whisky into him. Isn't that what the English drink, eh?"

In drunken tones, he went on: "Get some whisky. We have to make him drunk to make him talk."

As soon as those words were out I realised it was more than ever vital for me to keep control. I gave a laugh and shouted: "Let's all have a tot. Let's drink to the wine of Scotland."

Two bottles of whisky were produced. A full glass was handed to me. By now, half a dozen men were crowding my chair, poking their fists into my back and urging me to drink. Others were scuffling at the far end of the table. The burly senior sergeant gave me another shove.

"Come on, Engländer. Tell us why you stay in this German land? Who are you spying for? The English or the South Africans?"

I began talking. First, I analysed in tiresome detail the nature of my company's concessions and property rights in South Africa; told them about my own functions as manager, slipping in a point or two such as what the job was worth in cash; and then I explained that for such an enterprise it was essential to have an Englishman in the managerial post.

They listened to all this with a decidedly dull interest, half expecting that any moment I would be divulging some titbit of excitement. And all the time I spoke—which must have been for close on fifteen minutes, with interruptions—the sergeants continued to gulp down their outsize whiskies. One by one, doubtless bored into collapse by the blend of spirits and the drone of my voice, the men slumped into their seats. Before long, most of them were out cold.

For me, the luckiest moment came at the end of the second bottle. My aggressive sergeant slapped my shoulder once more,

stared down at me with bleary eyes, opened his mouth as if to start my interrogation all over again . . . and then, very suddenly, he too fell to the floor. I pushed my chair back, touched him with my foot where he lay half under the table, looked up at the President, and found him shaking with laughter.

He waved at the prostrate forms around us and called to me across the table: "We're the only ones left alive, Schottland . . . let's have another drink to celebrate." We clasped hands, then opened the third bottle.

Until almost four in the morning the President and I sat talking of war stories and of the German Army as a fighting machine. I quizzed him about who might have originated the grim joke of my interrogation. I feigned injured innocence, and pointed out that if I had been hurt the entire sergeants' mess would have been hauled before an inquiry. Some of the drunkards then woke up and joined us for yet another drink.

The party came to an end when my native boy, doubtless tired of waiting, arrived with my two horses. To the President I said: "Let's go for a ride. It'll help to clear our heads."

He gazed at me and gasped: "You're a terrible man, Schottland. I can barely keep my eyes open, and now you want me to ride that wild horse of yours! Goodnight."

I rose from the table, picked up my half-full glass, looked at it with a certain bravado, and decided not to court disaster by touching another drop. A trifle unsteady, I mounted my horse and returned to my quarters for twelve hours of heavy sleep.

Fortunately, this episode came to nothing, but it taught me one good lesson. It was not enough, in the perilous field of inter-nation security work, to court the Germans, speak their language, join in their activities and study their techniques. You had to talk, think and live like a German. You had to become one of them if you wanted to stay alive. You had to know the discipline of the soldier, and how to impose it. You had to understand the nature of the German military machine and the mental processes of the men who directed it. You had to learn how to take orders in true German fashion, and how to give them.

The next couple of years were busy ones, with the continued expansion of our company going hand in hand with the rapid development of those fabulous diamond resources that were turning South Africa into a land of economic merry-go-round and political scheming. Watching from my front-line position all that was being planned, meeting the people who were doing the planning, and personally getting to know the chief German, Dutch and African schemers, was to my mind the very essence of an exciting life.

True, I was in contact with the men who mattered—the German Colonial Minister, Dernburg, Dr. Schacht who followed him, General Diemling, the commander-in-chief, and many other executives and architects of the Kaiser's policies. But I was also establishing intimate relationships with German officers and NCOs of widely different social classes, learning about their families and home towns, and generally absorbing those items of knowledge which—very soon now, in a bloody world war—were on more than one occasion to save my own neck or win precious fighting facts to aid the strategy of the Allied forces.

In the days when I started my South African career, Germany had not been an obvious enemy, yet by 1910, young as I was, it seemed to me that the threat from the Kaiser was becoming daily more clear. For me, at this time, nothing could have been more electrifying than the tête-à-tête conducted one day by a pair of young Prussian lieutenants, drinking beer while I sat within earshot.

"Will there be war against England? What do you think?" asked one.

"They say in Berlin that the Kaiser's long-term plan will not reach its climax before 1916," said the other.

"How does he expect to replace England as the greatest colonial power in the world?"

"Presumably by a war of expansion starting in Europe. First, we must take Austria."

"And then?"

"Occupy the Ukraine."

"That would be some achievement."

"Then we must give ourselves a direct land route to India."

"How?"

"Through the railway line which has already been planned from Berlin to Baghdad."

"All quite impossible unless we first defeat England."

"Exactly. And that war will not begin till 1916."

The two Prussians were surveying, aptly enough, the Kaiser's ambitious portrait of a dominant Germany—a project that was being mapped out more than twenty years before the name of Adolf Hitler was hailed inside the Fatherland and headlined abroad.

By 1912 there had been some settling down in the political upheaval caused by the creation of the Union of South Africa. With this, however, came also a new and potent get-rid-of-the-British agitation, cleverly fostered by the Germans, who saw it all as the golden opportunity for replacing the Union Jack with the black, white and red of Imperial Germany's flag.

I was embroiled in this anti-British drive by means of a startling accusation that I had been mixed up with a notorious pair of convicted I.D.B. (illicit diamond buying) operators. The story behind these two crooks, whose names were Nande and Goslett, went back to 1909. The great diamond rush was reaching its peak, and speculation was rife about the origin of enormous numbers of stones discovered or rumoured to be discovered in one place or another.

It was April, and I was out on a routine trip with my cart drawn by four mules and two horses. Three Hottentot boys and two riding horses completed our party. One day we received the message that great excitement was stirring the small town of Ludentzbucht. Diamonds, they said, had been discovered in our territory not far from the Great Fish River, about 150 miles to the south. Three thousand cash-hungry prospectors had already scurried for licences.

The message, from my headquarters, declared: *Important you find exact site and extent of deposit. London most excited, eager for information.*

At once we headed south and were soon on the trail of the diamond finders, for in the dry sand of that bushland desert the tracks of men and horses could be read for days after they had passed by. When we eventually sighted the workings, I

called a halt. Men with new diamond finds of this kind were, often as not, desperate characters who would stop at nothing to guard their hoard against strangers in this remote country, and I knew that an incautious approach was certain to be greeted by gunfire.

A mile away from the glow of their open fire, we set up camp. It was 3 a.m., but sleep was out of the question, for we had to be ready to meet any attack by daylight. And sure enough, with the first light, I looked up at the sound of voices yelling. Two hundred yards away, two figures brandishing revolvers were heading towards us, shouting as they ran.

"Clear off!"

"Get out of here or we fire!"

"Clear off, before you get what's comin' to you!"

The voices were wild, angry and undisciplined; in fact the two men, hopelessly fierce, were easy game. I was lying out of view on my camp bed, rifle aimed. When they were twenty yards off I shouted "Halt!" as I slipped a cartridge into the breech. Bewildered, they stopped in their tracks on hearing me call out again: "Turn round, and keep your hands up."

Then I told two of my native boys to get behind them, keeping out of my line of fire. "Take their guns, and watch out for a knife stab. If they turn on you, I will shoot."

After disarming the pair I gave them mugs of coffee, told them they were on my territory, that I was the local boss of our company, that I would inspect their claims, together with any finds they had made, that I would guarantee them protection if their so-called rights were in order—and that, meantime, I would keep their guns and knives.

"We found the diamonds only yesterday, and decided to get to work on the site straight away," said one. He handed me a nice 1½-carat stone as a peace offering, and my suspicions began to grow. It did not look like diamond country to me, though I was no expert, and when I reached Warmbad the next day I cabled the news to my company, adding the warning that the "discovery" might well be a fraud.

Fraud it certainly was. While working at Pamona over on the coast, the two conspirators, Nande and Goslett, had stolen some twenty pounds of rough diamonds, all large stones but,

arriving in Ludentzbucht, they found it impossible, as ex-diamond-field workers, to get on board ship with their loot. So they invented the pretty pantomime of "finding" a site up-country where their diamonds could be used as "salting" material for a new discovery.

If all went well they would pay off the land, selling their claims to the *nouveau riche* diamond miners who until then had been the bakers, butchers and general storekeepers of Ludentzbucht. Finally, they would quit the country in safety and triumph, each with a wad of South African £5 notes.

Indeed, they got as far as making their sale, for Nande later showed me the large pack of notes which was his half of the £5,000 paid out for the spurious claim by none other than the local mayor.

Plain clumsiness, however, was the keynote of all their operations, and despite the half-hearted co-operation of a police spy, Nande and Goslett were soon unmasked. They had not even troubled to scatter their loot. Before long the large glass jars containing the stolen diamonds were dug out from the site where I had tracked them down. The two men were charged, tried and sentenced. Each received seven years.

For me it was not the end of the story. Nearly three years after my encounter with the diamond thieves I was ordered one day to appear before Herr "Tuppy" Gibbels, a new judge sent from Germany, with whom I was already on friendly terms. He was reading a report from—of all people—Nande and Goslett, now accusing me of complicity in the diamond deals for which they had been sentenced.

After three years. What was the idea, I wondered? My thoughts were interrupted when Gibbels referred, as he read the document, to the dates of certain meetings alleged to have taken place between me and the two gaolbirds. I asked the judge to read the passage again. "May I produce my diaries for the years 1909 and 1910?" I asked.

Gibbels agreed. I showed him the carefully-preserved records of my activities on the dates concerned. From these it was clear enough that I could not have been anywhere in the vicinity of Ludentzbucht on the days of my alleged meetings in that town with Messrs N. and G. A few more items of conclusive

evidence were sufficient to convince the judge that the file of my supposed crimes could now be decently buried. There the matter ended.

I was beginning to realise, however, that these strange accusations were only one very small part of Germany's effort to rid South Africa of the British. At first it seemed odd that I should be selected as their chief target, for I was, after all, almost one of their own community. But they knew, too, that I was trusted in most other communities of the region, and doubtless reasoned that if Herr Schottland himself could be discredited, the campaign would be given a healthy fillip. The situation was full of irony, for even while they plotted, the Germans were never quite able to make up their minds about my value or status. "Who *is* this man? Is he German or British?" That, according to one of my sources of information, was the question they often asked among themselves, and that was roughly the climate towards which I was constantly working.

Among my truest and strongest supporters was General Jan Smuts, already a respected statesman. He it was who intervened on my behalf when the Germans clapped me in prison in 1914.

I was actually accompanying the judge, Gibbels, on a tour of the eastern border country when the police picked me up one blazing August day, at Warmbad, but not before I had despatched a message to the British Police, concerning the disposition of troops in South-West Africa, a message which was to reach General Smuts later that week. My quarters in Keetmanshoop were carefully searched, though no scrap of evidence against me was found. Indeed, the care with which I had followed my activities was now to pay dividends of a sort. They had, so they said, considerable information about my operations as a spy. I was sent to prison at Windhoek, and my confinement lasted almost a year, until July 1915.

But none of the so-called evidence was ever produced. During the long, arduous questioning I was given by the staff officer attached to the German colonial troops, I learned perhaps the most valuable lesson of all my career in South Africa. From that officer, a Lieutenant Hepka, I acquired some of the techniques of interrogating an enemy subject.

They were dramatic months, for it was not long before I began organising the prisoners, white as well as native, into a variety of bids for improved conditions and facilities. At one point, early in 1915, I was "chosen" to join a small group of prisoners who were to be sent to East Africa as hostages; a measure which was, luckily for us, abortive.

So, in the village of Tsumeb, we were placed in a native compound from which 250 native prisoners had just been removed. The stench throughout the camp was unbearable, and I demanded an interview with the German commandant.

I said: "We prisoners have just completed a forty-eight hours' journey on a narrow-gauge railway, and now you expect us to sleep on bare boards in native quarters. We will not stand for that."

The commandant, a Major Thomaczek, was conciliatory despite his gleaming sword, spurs and brand-new khaki uniform. "I had only twelve hours' notice of your arrival," he explained. "There was no time to arrange a proper camp."

I decided that truculence should be the order of the day on my part. "I warn you that if we are not out of here within one hour the place will be burned down." The threat was no idle one, and he knew it. Tents, equipment and other materials for constructing better accommodation were forthcoming the same afternoon.

Some weeks later I was transferred to a camp at Namatoni, where, after the British landing, we prisoners were able to save from destruction by the Germans enormous supplies of food, animal fodder and ammunition. For five weeks the British forces had been driving through the trackless bush, and officers and men alike were overjoyed to discover that our vast store of goods was still intact.

My first thought on being released from gaol in the summer of 1915 was to get to England, there to join up as an intelligence officer. I was already long overdue for home leave, and after landing in England and making my report to the London headquarters of our firm, I jumped on a bus for Whitehall.

Into the War Office I walked, to find that becoming a British intelligence man was easier said than done.

Chapter Three

THROUGH THE GERMAN LINES

IMAGINE a stocky, undistinguished-looking soldier in his mid-thirties. In a War Office classroom near the Horse Guards Parade he is attending an army course on elementary intelligence matters. Thirty to forty commissioned officers are his fellow students.

One Monday afternoon, as the lecture comes to an end, the officer in charge of the course announces that the sandy-haired young man in the third row has been selected for "special duties", and will be ready to sail for France before the end of the week.

"What is your rank?" asks the officer.

"I am a private soldier, sir."

"Is that so?" says he. "In that case, be at Charing Cross by ten o'clock on Friday morning, and you will join the train as a second lieutenant." As might be guessed, the sandy-haired man from the ranks who underwent this somewhat peremptory metamorphosis into officer and gentleman was myself.

In this fashion, during the winter of 1915, began my activities of the First World War; and over the next two-and-a-half years, in various parts of England, France, Belgium and Holland, the adventures of wartime intelligence were to bring me into contact with a striking assortment of men and events.

With a slim, popular Royal figure causing constant embarrassment through his anxiety to move around near the front line of battle—the young Prince of Wales, now Duke of Windsor . . .

With a gruff-voiced, bulldoggish Minister of Munitions called Winston Churchill . . .

With a bevy of British generals and other high-rankers, asking "How did you do it?" after my first major attempt to deduce the facts of enemy manpower in the field . . .

With a tough, courageous German for whom I ordered tea and toast before sitting down to a friendly chat—with four of my men hidden in the room . . .

With the man who was surely the first war criminal of modern times . . .

With the enemy forces, inside their own camp, on three separate occasions—and a decidedly hurried getaway when, on the last of these excursions, suspicion finally fell.

These are among the highlights of a period which began with my return to wartime London, following my spell of imprisonment in South Africa.

First attempts to insinuate myself into active intelligence work met with disappointment. After passing the War Office language tests without difficulty, they bluntly told me: No vacancies. I then tried the Naval Department, but at thirty-four, it seemed, I was too old.

The next step, however, was more encouraging, for I managed to achieve an interview with the Inns of Court infantry battalion—the “lawyers’ army”. Full of hope, I attended upon five high-ranking officers sitting in committee near Lincoln’s Inn Fields.

There, a major-general surveyed me with undisguised doubt, and said: “We’ve very full up, you know. I’m afraid we shall need an exceptionally strong recommendation before we can accept someone like you.” Unabashed, I replied in deliberately casual tones: “Would General Smuts do?”

I was not disappointed. The officer gave an embarrassed cough, and muttered: “Well—er—yes, of course, if you can get him.”

A few days later the celebrated Jan Smuts cabled from South Africa his approval of my qualities, such as they were, and without further ado I was accepted into the Inns of Court Officers’ Training Corps.

I was not in the least ashamed of having baldly used General Smuts for my purposes, for I might add at this stage that of all the things in my favour, my outward appearance was the least impressive. I was short. Physically, I looked half as tough as I truly was. My voice was rather flat and colourless, and I had a face that seemed easily forgotten. Indeed, I was, and still

am, an unusually ordinary-looking individual. Not that those attributes, if such they can be called, have ever displeased me, for in the world of espionage and security they are a man's finest asset; a defensive camouflage of immeasurable value.

That winter, at all events, I went through the infantry course in five hard-working weeks which ended in my "commanding" the battalion during a hectic twenty-minutes' exercise on Lincoln's Inn Fields. Then I was transferred to the cavalry section, where my good fortune continued; out of thirty or so eager applicants I was the only man to pass the stiff riding test. Complacently, I refrained from pointing out that until my return to England I had virtually lived on horseback, roaming the South African bush.

Within a few weeks the War Office, having turned me down, decided to call me up—to take part in an intelligence course, the first of its kind, designed to train officers for service in France.

In the classroom at Horse Guards I was interviewed by a pair of generals. After some preliminary note-taking, one put down his pencil and rapped out a question.

"What do you know about the German Army?"

I paused for a moment before answering, not knowing whether they were aware of my background.

"Quite a bit. I was in it for four years."

At this the military men raised their ample eyebrows and turned to converse quietly with each other.

I caught the words "This fellow will do . . ." and my hopes soared.

One month later came that welcome announcement, delivered while I was attending the War Office course at Horse Guards, of my selection for special duties in France, along with the news that by the end of the week I would be elevated to the modest station of second lieutenant.

Resplendent in my newly-purchased one-pip uniform, I landed in France and reported to GHQ, where an Intelligence officer, Captain Marshall Cornwall, gave me an outline of what was required. I almost purred with satisfaction when I learned that what they needed was a man with intimate knowledge of the German Army's recruiting system.

At GHQ there was a notion that the Germans at this time were contriving, somehow or other, to rehabilitate their sick and wounded, and get them back into the field somewhat faster than we could. If true, what did this mean? Could it be that Germany was already feeling the pinch in manpower? But how to ferret out the facts? It was decided that I should make a start by questioning some three thousand German prisoners who were then occupying a transit camp near Le Havre.

How many of these men had been through hospital? How many were hospitalised through sickness? How many because of wounds? My orders were to deliver the fullest possible report on such questions. It might, they thought, turn out to be a lengthy task, but I thought otherwise, for I realised that here was my first big chance to test, and prove, the value of all I had learned during my South African efforts to understand the Germans by becoming "one of them".

I got my orders shortly before noon one day. By two o'clock that afternoon I was in the prisoners' transit camp at Le Havre, carrying with me a large bunch of pencils and a few hundred sheets of scrap paper. First, I asked for the entire camp to be called out on parade.

It was a strange moment, facing the three thousand Germans, and when I began addressing them in their own language it seemed for an instant as if I were back in the bush country of the Orange River under the hot African sun. I realised also that I was falling quite naturally into the manner of a German officer rather than that of a British interrogator.

To begin, I ordered the senior NCOs to step forward, and arranged for all the captive men to be divided according to their units. Then came a "briefing" talk for the *Feldwebel*, or sergeant-majors. To each I handed pencil and paper. Work through the units as rapidly as possible, I told them, and make notes of every man who has been through hospital, stating briefly what were his wounds or ailments, and for how long he was out of action.

By now, I was able to speak German not perfectly but without an English accent, indeed without any identifiable accent, and the sergeant-majors were plainly puzzled by the authority of this little man who acted like a German officer. Having

delivered my instructions, however, I observed that they were ready to obey without question.

They got to work. Two hours later I was presented with a collection of grubby, though legible, notes which summed up the hospital history of every man in the camp. Then, before dismissing them, I made my own little tour to check the accuracy of the sergeant-majors' efforts. This step was something more than mere commonsense efficiency; it was also, I suppose, a piece of conceit, for I had the feeling that I had done the job rather well but just wanted to be certain.

I carried out, therefore, a sample check with my file of scrap paper. Here was a man with two missing fingers, another with chest wounds; some with leg or foot troubles; here were several with head injuries, and various medical disorders. Consulting my lists as I went through the ranks talking to the prisoners, it was clear that the sergeant-majors had not let me down.

By five o'clock I was on my way back to the town. By six o'clock, just four hours after I had started the job, a preliminary statement on the answers to our prison-camp quiz was on its way by messenger to headquarters. And by midnight despatch rider I delivered my detailed report in writing. It seemed to me a reasonable reflection that the war could not last long if only the direction of affairs were left in my hands!

Nothing happened for three weeks; then one day I was ordered to report to GHQ, where, to my consternation, my boss informed me I was to be replaced at Le Havre. "What's more," he said with mock seriousness, "you have to report for lunch today at the senior officers' mess."

Wondering whether I was due for a severe dressing-down, I went along to the senior mess to find myself seated at lunch in the company of the brigadier, some twelve to fifteen generals and major-generals, and not a man beneath the rank of colonel. I was still a second lieutenant.

Luncheon over, I was suddenly in a circle of enquiring generals, and the purpose of it all became clear. They were doubting the accuracy of my report on the prisoners.

"You appear, Scotland, to have collected some remarkable information. Is it all true?"

"That's what we want to know—is it true?"

These opening questions nettled me, but in such company I could hardly display my feelings. "I assure you, gentlemen, that the facts are as given in my report."

The generals followed with a crossfire of fresh queries.

"How did you manage all this in so short a time?"

"Where did you find the details about their wounded?"

"Who supplied you with the facts?"

And again the demand: "How could you dig out so much information in a few hours?"

I explained in detail the story of my visit to the transit camp, concluding: "Those German NCOs produced the information. All I did was to check their work."

Leaning forward, an older man among the generals flatly expressed his mistrust. "If that was your method," he said, "how can we be sure your report is reliable? How do you know those fellows were speaking the truth?"

Suppressing my irritation, I decided to stick my chin out politely.

"May I point out, sir, that when I tell a German soldier to do a job, I think he will do it. I checked many of these facts with the injured men concerned."

My point went home. The dining-room atmosphere seemed to relax. A day or two after the inquisition I was officially appointed German "expert" at GHQ, and became responsible for manpower information on the German Army.

It was during this first year in France that I met the boyish Royal soldier who was to abdicate the throne of England just twenty years later. This much was certain; in those risky days of trench warfare the young Prince of Wales showed no desire to abdicate from the field of battle. He was, in fact, very much in action—too active, some said, for he went frequently up the line, within shelling range, and any spy roaming that part of the country could without difficulty have picked him out and shot him. Constantly the high-ups reminded him that it would be a terrible thing for England if he were unlucky enough to be taken prisoner. To safeguard against that danger, the most forward sectors of the front line were ruled out of bounds for him. In general, his presence in France was excellent

for the troops' morale and his familiar figure won him wide popularity.

Towards the end of 1916 I had been sent to a place that the army dubbed Edgehill, a secret railhead for the Somme battle front. There my task was to deal with German prisoners taken on the Somme.

The prisoners' barbed-wire enclosure (which we called The Cage) was just across the road from a casualty clearing station where the wounded, both British and German, were brought for treatment before being put on the trains bound for hospital further back. I had my own tent.

One clear, lovely night about the end of harvest time, an enemy 'plane came over. We heard the racket of his engine and waited. Then he came right over us. I dropped to the ground and lay flat as the first of his light bombs struck a few hundred yards away. It was almost dawn. The moon was still up and the light was good.

Painted large across the casualty clearing station was the usual red cross, easily visible, it seemed to me, from the height at which the German flew in.

Two more bombs fell and the hospital received a direct hit. I dashed over to give what help I could. Some of the hospital tents were a mess, but the worst damage was suffered by the surgical section, where a wounded patient on the operating table had been killed outright and several of the medical staff injured. The dead patient, ironically enough, was a German.

An hour or two later we got the news that a flier had been shot down some miles away and was being sent at once to The Cage for questioning.

When the man was brought in to me I took one look at the sullen, shiftily expression and decided that my suspicions were probably correct—in short, that here was the culprit of the bombing outrage. First, however, I allowed him to sleep for an hour or so. Then I began the interrogation, towards which his attitude was both obstructive and nervous.

Into The Cage when I was halfway through the questioning rode the Prince of Wales. At that time he was an officer who dealt with supplies and personnel, representing jointly the Adjutant-General and the Quartermaster-General. He had

ridden over from Corps Headquarters about two miles away; his horse, I remember, was a handsome dark chestnut.

Breaking off the interrogation, we shook hands and talked. The Prince came straight to the point.

"I was horrified when I heard about the bombing of the CCS," he began.

"It was a bad business, a criminal business," I said.

"They told me at Corps about this airman shot down. What do you think? Was he the man responsible?"

"I'm not sure—yet. I haven't finished interrogating him, but I think he's the man, sir."

"Please let me know, will you, if you discover he was responsible? Let me hear from you as soon as possible," the Prince added, clearly distressed by the whole business.

When he had gone, I called back the German pilot. By now he was in a state of nerves bordering on collapse and clearly thought he was going to be shot. For my part, I was still not certain about his guilt, and tried one final test.

"Come with me," I said. "I've got something to show you."

I walked him across the road to the bombed operating theatre and conducted him around the wreckage. I showed him the body of the German soldier who had been a patient.

"This man, and several of the wounded, are your brothers," I declared. "I hope you are proud of your night's work."

The airman's breakdown at the sight of his maimed countrymen was all I needed to convince me that here was the perpetrator of the first major war crime (though that term had not been invented) of the twentieth century. As it turned out, he committed suicide before he could be brought to trial. He was not the last of his nation to resort to that solution to escape justice.

Soon after the bombing incident a German patient in the hospital sent a message saying he would like to see me. Interested, I went back. His story, an odd one, I found highly intriguing, especially on learning that he actually wanted me to deliver a message to his sweetheart, a Belgian girl. I realised, too, that since the German soldier was a Saxon he might tend to be more pro-British than pro-Prussian.

It seemed that he had become friendly with a Belgian

farming family, and rather more than friendly with the pretty daughter of the household, while he was stationed at a part of the line where Belgian troops held one side of a canal that ran through the farm, and weaker German forces the other side.

What made me prick up my ears, however, was the hint that a good deal of movement took place on both sides of the canal, with German *and* Belgian people passing to and fro into enemy territory. Here, if his tale were true, was a place that might secretly be used by the Germans for infiltrating through the line in order to get information about Allied activity.

And if German agents could get through to our side, why not the other way round, too? Why not, I reflected, a British intelligence man penetrating into the enemy camp? The more I savoured this notion the more it appealed, and after carefully noting the entire geography of the matter I promised my Saxon to deliver a message of reassurance to his girl friend, informing her that although wounded he was safely in the hands of the British. Before the war was much older I was to make more use of this secret channel in quest of the facts about enemy manpower.

Nowadays, the deployment of a country's resources in peace or war is a highly-developed social science, a complex pattern of facts and statistics and human beings with an army of experts to fashion them into active, productive, fighting fitness. But forty years ago, the task was not so easy; and the technical expert, moreover, was a rarer bird.

In the era of the Kaiser, every German male had a military category based on the year of his twentieth birthday, the year of his call-up for military service; and at the beginning of the First World War the active German Army consisted, in theory, of men in the 1912 to 1914 classes, plus the reserves.

As the war advanced, more and more of the older men were drafted into service to offset the tremendous drain on the nation's fighting force. Later still, when casualties were even heavier, came the younger ones, the boys of seventeen.

By interrogating and classifying our war prisoners, along with other methods, I aimed to build up a detailed picture of the state of the German units, the fighting condition of their

troops, the scale of their losses and casualties, the effect of the war upon families at home in Germany, and the morale of the men sent into battle.

One day I had ten thousand prisoners on parade. Like many others, they were totally puzzled by my capacity for talking to them—and about them. On scores of other occasions I would be able to astound a prisoner merely by enquiring his age, before informing him of his army status and experience.

From my headquarters in the École Militaire at Montreuil-sur-Mer I would also be producing on paper, with graphs, sketches and detailed lists, the picture that revealed how the German units were made up—what were the different military categories, what were their jobs in the line, what was disclosed by the captured letters telling of home conditions, and so on. As head of our manpower control unit I was completely mobile, moving freely along the front whenever conditions suggested that promising information might be forthcoming.

After every major battle operation I would see the prisoners and begin the task of categorising them. We saw that as each new class of men came into the line so the quality of their fighting and the length of their useful training showed a marked deterioration. When we attacked in front of Amiens early in August 1918, for example, the 5,000 prisoners taken on the 3rd Army battlefield were brought to me at Poullenville. From eight o'clock that night until six the following morning I sat making my analysis. My figures revealed that no less than 35 per cent of the German troops taken prisoner that day were boys of the 1919 class.

It was there at Poullenville, incidentally, that I met Mr. Winston Churchill who was then our Minister of Munitions. I might add that the great man was hardly enthusiastic about our particular brand of manpower work at that time; indeed, he was said to have confessed himself at a loss to understand its precise value and importance. My superiors and I were equally unable to understand why Mr. Churchill should have found it all so baffling!

At Poullenville that day Mr. Churchill had come to examine things for himself. He took one look at the three thousand or

so prisoners who were marching on the roads, stepped out of his car, and came to where I stood watching the scene.

"Not much sign of lack of manpower there," he commented, nodding towards the comparatively fresh, smart, disciplined body of marching young men.

"Those are merely uniforms you are looking at, sir," I said. At random from the German ranks I then called out several soldiers.

"Show me your paybook," I told each man.

They brought out their paybooks and I pointed out to Mr. Churchill that all belonged to the raw, green class of boyish recruits from the 1919 category—lads who had surrendered, many of them without the smallest effort at fighting. It was in truth due to this fact that they were able, in captivity, to appear so healthily disciplined on that bright summer's day when the Minister of Munitions gave them his appraising glance.

Many of the older, more experienced German soldiers had themselves summed up the situation to perfection.

"Why do you think these youngsters surrendered so freely and fought so badly?" I had enquired during interrogations.

The replies were significant.

"None of them wanted to fight. . ."

"They were so many frightened kids. . ."

"Their mothers told them to surrender to the British. . ."

"They just threw down their arms—so *we* had to do the same. . ."

"What else could we do?"

Throughout these war years in France and Belgium in my day-to-day work my brain seemed to act like a sponge, for ever absorbing, as well as listening, questioning, watching, confirming, checking—and always encouraging German soldiers to tell me the tales of their personal experience that I might piece them into what I hoped was an intelligent, not to mention an intelligence, pattern for Britain.

With this background, I was able to contemplate with a certain degree of confidence the notion of a busman's holiday in the very heart of the enemy's territory.

The heart, for our purposes, was at a place called Beverloo.

A ramshackle small township in the north-east corner of Belgium, only a dozen miles from the Dutch frontier and less than fifty from the border of the German "empire" itself, it was among the first of the useful places that fell to the Germans as soon as they marched through King Leopold's Belgium in 1914. On its outskirts stood a large rambling barracks which the enemy at once commandeered as a centre for training and housing their own forces.

Straight away, the Germans built extensive practice grounds round about, and equipped the barracks also with a sizeable *Liebesgaben*, or welfare supplies centre . . . precisely the sort of "comforts" department to which I had been accustomed during my service with the German Army in South-West Africa.

Very soon I discovered that getting behind the enemy lines in Belgium was not so difficult; for I tested, one starless night, that entry channel described for me by the German prisoner whose sweetheart pined for him, or so he hoped, on the farm nearby. Across the canal I went with the connivance of the farmer (whose daughter I did indeed reassure in the matter of her lover's safety and well-being), and on to the next stage in my secret mission at Beverloo.

Once inside occupied Belgium, however, what then? How to get into Beverloo? More important, how to effect an entry into the German barracks?

To achieve all this meant making yet another risky contact, but one that succeeded. Over in Brussels was an old comrade from South Africa, a German who trusted in the belief that I was an *Auslands Deutscher*—a German from overseas (this pretence being one that I frequently invoked to explain my status).

What better recommendation for a post in the Kaiser's service than from the very man who bossed the German *Liebesgaben* organisation in Brussels? Through him, at all events, I was enabled to join the staff and set forward on my scheme for taking a close look at the new recruits.

First, I donned a suit of rough farming clothes and made the long trek—mostly on foot—from the British side of the front through to occupied Brussels. There were no language problems now. My German and my Cape Dutch, with a few

Flemish variations, were good enough to get me through the gauntlet of the entire German Army if need be. Then, a rendezvous outside Brussels to change into the special uniform—a green tunic was all it consisted of—worn by the German civilians who carried out these odd jobs in the Kaiser's army. Safe at last in my tunic, I could go about visiting as I pleased.

Up to the spring of 1918 I made a total of three secret trips into Beverloo, working behind the welfare counter, doling out the goods, serving the drinks—and always listening—to the men of the German Army. The first of these trips, for one night only, was somewhat exploratory, designed in fact largely to test the working efficiency of the idea; it was fairly uneventful, and I will not relate it in detail except to say that I picked up a good deal of information.

There was no shortage of action and excitement, however, throughout my second and third visits among the Germans at Beverloo. The gist of one desultory discussion among half-a-dozen disgruntled soldiers, lounging against the rough wooden counter of the *Liebesgaben* room at Beverloo barracks, remains firmly in my mind to this day.

"You from the east?"

"Yes, and glad to be away from the Russian front."

"Oh, I don't know. The Russians weren't so bad."

"How does the war go here in the west? Is it awful?"

"Pretty bad; it's all according."

"According to what?"

"Those damn British—eh, Hans?"

"Against the British you don't get any sleep."

"They're active the whole time."

"It's always bad against the British."

"No peace."

"If you're lucky, you go up against the French or the Belgians."

Then, inevitably . . . "I'm sick and tired of it all." And, finally; "Somebody will have to take action if the Kaiser doesn't finish it pretty soon."

Together with all I had gleaned during similar evenings while serving at the counter, an interesting pattern was forming, with the accent on such topics as the fast-growing sourness

of young men called up before their time; the complaints and despair of mothers, wives and sweethearts at home; the impact upon troops and civilians of the great wave of killing; the food shortage and battle conditions; the men who were serving on the Russian front, and the men sent back to fight on the western front; the men who were glad of the "change"; and the dissatisfied ones who had become Bolshevik-minded. I had at this point (winter, 1917, then again early in 1918) a twofold aim. Firstly, to learn whatever I could about the troops brought into the west from the hard Russian front where they had been fighting. Secondly, to see at first hand how the boy recruits of the 1919 class were turning out.

As an official, however minor, in the welfare service, I was able to sleep out of barracks, which was just as well for my safety; true, there was nothing incriminating to be found in my haversack, but I did carry a sheaf of notes in code—and they were the last things I would have wanted the Germans to unearth if they took it into their heads to search my belongings.

So I lodged at a small, simple house in the village, getting my daily exercise through the 2½-mile tramp from its single dusty street to the barracks on the outskirts. My hosts were a young Belgian farmer about my own age and his seventy-year-old mother, a thin, white-haired, black-gowned indomitable Flemish grannie who hated the invaders with all her formidable strength of mind and purpose. Grandma and her son (whose wife and two children were evacuated to the home of relatives in Holland) were never to discover my real identity; certainly they did not guess that I was a British officer; they knew me by the name of Schottland, regarded me as a Holländer, and asked no questions. Like many Belgian civilians, they found it a pleasure as well as a duty to do everything in their power to hamper the enemy, and the slight but significant glances that Grandma would give me from time to time were enough to suggest that she suspected my loyalty to my German employers. Hence, almost from the start, she displayed a marked degree of affection towards me.

What courageous, patient women they were, these Belgian grannies, sitting at their parlour windows, day after day, innocently wielding their needles in the time-honoured craft of

crochet work! And what crochet work, too! For the fact is that some of these old ladies were an amateur secret service working in the Allied cause. They would crochet—in code—vital messages concerning train and troop movements and other enemy activities going on around them. Often enough, a woman would sit by her window all day collecting the information which her keen, clever little brain would translate into the pattern of the crochet.

At night, some ordinary Belgian farmworker would take a bicycle ride. Oddly enough, he would meet an old friend, and the pair would chat over a cigarette. Then they would part, and a small, delicate piece of crochet would change hands and go one step further on its journey. And the brave battle of the old women would continue. Grandma of Beverloo was such a one.

For myself, the worst moment among the Germans came during my third visit. Leaning on the counter of the welfare centre, I was gossiping, during a slack period one night, with a young German who had seen service in Russia. This was where I tripped. It was safe enough to talk idly with a group, or even two men, but a mistake to be seen in conversation with a lone individual.

My heart missed a beat when I realised, of a sudden, that I was being scrutinised by the sergeant-in-charge, a dark, beefy, surly character with an untidy moustache. He was leaning against a pillar, picking his teeth, eyeing me reflectively, and frowning. Then, slowly, he lumbered over to the counter and surveyed me in silence. The young soldier sidled away.

"I'd like a little talk with you, Schottland," grunted the big man at last.

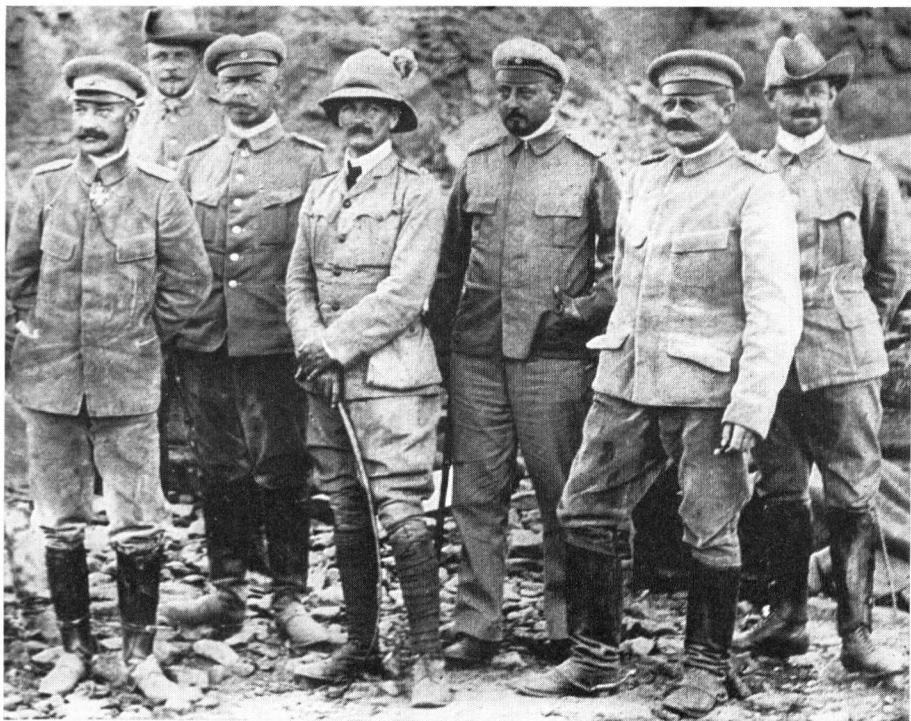
"Yes, sergeant," I said.

"You're just as lazy as the other civilian pigs we've had working here, aren't you, Schottland?" he went on.

"I'm sorry, sergeant, but the rush is over. There's no harm in having a chat, surely?" I protested.

"Of course not, Schottland. You have an answer for everything, haven't you, Schottland?"

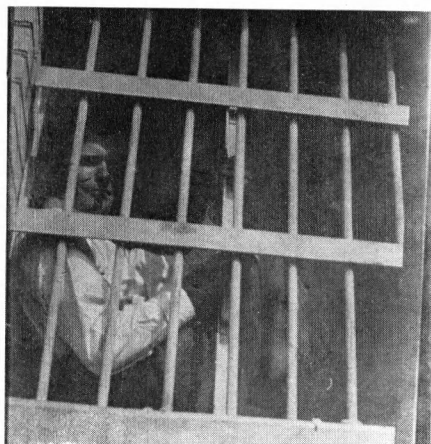
I didn't like the way he kept repeating my name, and I wondered what was coming. But when he spoke again, there was no doubt of what was brewing in his large head.



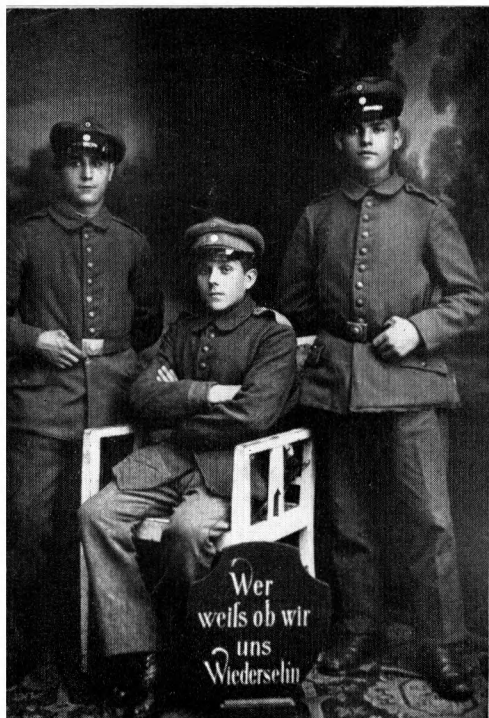
Wearing helmet, Major Wade, British attaché to the German forces in South-West Africa, with German General Staff officers at Ramonsdrift, 1905. Major Wade first interested the Author in intelligence work.



German troops with a howitzer at Keetmanshoop, 1908. Information about new guns was among Colonel Scotland's first efforts in Intelligence.



The Author spends Christmas in Windhoek prison, 1914. He was behind bars for nearly a year before returning to England.



Three 18-year-old German youths of the 1920 class, called up in the Spring of 1918.

The Prince of Wales visits the Front in France, 1918.



"Are you quite sure you were born in Germany, Schottland?" he snapped suddenly. "You don't sound like a German to me."

I brazened it out; there was not much else I could do. "Look here, sergeant, I can't help my accent. I've told you before, I'm an Auslands Deutscher. You know quite well I've lived nearly all my life in South-West Africa."

He gave an incredulous snort. "Uh-huh. All right, Schottland. We'll see," he said.

Very suddenly, he turned on his heel, strode to the door, looked back once, then went hurriedly out.

Trying to be casual, I wiped the counter with a cloth. It was time for the big decision. I knew that the sergeant would soon be back with an officer whose first check would be on my identity papers. It did not take me long to reach the conclusion that I had seen enough of Beverloo, and *vice versa*.

Glancing round the hut I saw there was only a trio sitting at a corner table, already preparing to leave. The whole place was suddenly quiet. The battered metal alarm clock ticked loudly on a shelf behind me. But the three men were in no hurry. I watched them gather their belongings and wished to heaven they would leave. Still they chatted, lazily, painfully slow. Another five minutes went by. Then, at last, they rose, called goodnight and sauntered out through the main door.

I moved like a rocket the instant that door closed. First, from under the counter I pulled out my haversack. Then I opened the wall cupboard, took two or three packets of biscuits and chocolate, put them into my bag, vaulted over the counter and made a dash for the wash-room door near the far end of the hut.

By clambering on the rim of the wash basin I could reach the ledge of the single small window set rather high in the wall. With a struggle I succeeded in hoisting my body through the window, where I sat on the ledge, listening.

Outside was only a patch of waste ground where no one was likely to be prowling. From the window-ledge there was a ten-foot drop. Then, across the caked mud stretch, into a field, over towards a small clump of woodland, and on to the road heading north in the direction of the Dutch border.

Before venturing into the road, however, I carried out a simple operation without which I would have been utterly lost. Long ago, I had had my green German tunic nicely adapted for just such occasions as these. Its lining had been removed, and in its place was sewn a thin tweed which transformed the garment into a reversible coat. Turned inside out, the tunic became a slightly threadbare version of the jacket worn by any Belgian worker on the farms.

On the road, twenty minutes later, I was striking up an acquaintance with a labourer pushing a handcart loaded with wood. To him I introduced myself as a Holländer, and before long was listening to what was clearly his habitual tirade against "the Bosches". Parting on excellent terms a few miles later, we shook hands, and I continued alone to the border.

By way of Holland I first came back to England; then, without delay, across the Channel to HQ in France; and there I made my report. I paid no further visits to Beverloo.

In all my contacts with the Germans I realised how fortunate I had been to have spent my early years in the German-dominated bush territories of South Africa. It was the cosmopolitan quality of my experience that saved my neck, despite occasional suspicions, and to have lived in Germany itself would not have been of greater practical value.

The finest illustration, perhaps, of the value of this experience came during one of the oddest interrogations I have ever conducted. Into one of the very foremost prisoner cages, shortly after some heavy fighting in which we had taken large numbers of the enemy, I had gone to question a German *Oberleutenant*. This man was something of a special case, having brought with him to the cage a letter—of recommendation—from no less a body than the Australian unit which had eventually captured him. Leading his machine-gun section in dogged resistance from a slit trench, he had, it appeared, stubbornly held up the Australians for close on four days. Their letter strongly recommended him for good treatment, declaring that he had proved himself an exceptionally courageous soldier.

I knew, however, that the interrogation of such a man could not be ordered in any casual fashion. It was clearly unthinkable

to enter the cage, single him out from his fellows, march him away for questioning, then return him to his companions to face their scorn. There was, in short, an important element of "face saving" to be borne in mind if any interrogation were to stand the slightest chance of success.

Entering the cage, therefore, with the Australians' letter in my hand, I called for the men's attention.

"Who is Oberleutenant Kastel?" I asked. Everyone in the cage looked up with interest as Kastel stepped forward.

"I have here a letter from an Australian unit," I went on, "informing us that you have shown particular bravery in battle. Will you please come along with me for a talk. I would very much like to hear your story."

Kastel walked hesitantly, with a slight embarrassment, through the groups of prisoners, and I noted the approving glances that followed him; my subterfuge had obviously served its purpose.

I conducted him to a Nissen hut outside the cage, pulled up a couple of chairs near the stove, offered him a cigarette and asked him if he would join me in a mug of tea. A few minutes later, when the orderly brought us quite a spread, with buttered toast and jam, Kastel was already unbending, ready to talk.

Tea and toast was followed by a friendly chat, in German, about his exploits. He told me his story, after which I asked about his family, his civilian job, what part of Germany he lived in, his plans for when the war was over, and so on.

Then I asked him where he was born. He laughed and said: "In a little place you've never heard of."

"Well, just try me," I invited. "I've travelled a good deal. Where was it?"

He laughed again, shaking his head. "I was born in a place called Gibeon."

Very quietly, watching his reactions, I said: "Oh yes, I know Gibeon very well. It's a village in South-West Africa, on the banks of the Fisch River. You approach it over a small cliff, looking down on the church tower. A few houses on one side and a collection of Hottentot huts on the other."

Kastel's eyes, wide open, were unbelieving. "But . . . how could you know?" he stammered.

"I know much more than that," I went on. "Your father, for example—he was the local missionary down in Gibeon. I knew him too."

By this time Kastel could hardly speak for astonishment that a British officer should be recalling the affairs of his own father in some remote corner of the South African bush. For me it was a great stroke of luck; five minutes later our uniforms had disappeared and we were gossiping nineteen to the dozen like a pair of old comrades.

Kastel, who had been on leave before his capture, talked at great length about home front conditions, the morale of the German people, the rationing situation, his opinions about the war and about the Kaiser's policies. I just sat back and listened. Then I returned him to the cage, where he straightway began recounting the tale of coincidence to his captive friends.

One thing he did not know. Out of sight, hidden at four points around the Nissen hut, were four of my men—with notebooks.

Chapter Four

A MEETING WITH HITLER

IN the City of London, in a restaurant in a narrow street—the street named aptly enough Old Jewry—I was fuming with anger one windy March day during 1939. At the luncheon table where I habitually sat with half a dozen executives from nearby office buildings, the topic of conversation was Hitler's Germany, in particular the Nazi onslaughts against the Jews. For a quarter of an hour I had been stifling my protests while listening to four respectable London businessmen uttering sentiments that were plainly, foolishly, outrageously pro-Nazi. Old Hitler was certainly putting the Jews in their place and good luck to him . . . we could do with a dose of the same medicine in this country . . . what a farce was this Territorial Army recruiting campaign . . . why keep up the ridiculous scare of an attack from Germany? . . .

I listened, as I say, for fifteen minutes; then I could tolerate it no longer and with a good deal of venom told my companions what I thought of their opinions and judgment. I told of my trips through Germany and of what I had seen there. I told of the Gestapo, and of the criminal Himmler's SS men. I told of the arrogant sixteen-year-old thugs strutting the streets with Browning pistols in their belts. I told of my own meetings with some of the foremost Nazi Party leaders and supporters.

I warned these ordinary Englishmen what they would have to face when the Nazis—when, not *if*—decided to unleash their forces in the most ambitious drive for power ever known.

"If we were unready in 1914," I concluded, "we are still more unready today."

Surprised and a shade embarrassed but nevertheless intrigued by this outburst, my luncheon acquaintances questioned me further about the German situation. I do not know whether in the end I convinced them of anything at all; I returned slowly

and somewhat sadly to my office, reflecting that, on the very eve of a second world war, there were still to be found many "decent" Englishmen sufficiently misguided and misinformed, stupid, ignorant and blind enough to believe that Adolf Hitler, was making a contribution to peace and stability by flinging German Jewry into his camps of horror and degradation.

It was fashionable to be wise a few years later. It was pitiful that so few had heeded the evidence and found wisdom a few years earlier. For me, at any rate, the evidence had been piling high during twenty years of travel, study and persistent association with Germans of many ranks ever since the end of the First World War.

These contacts were made in South Africa, in South America, and in Germany itself. With the end of hostilities in 1918 I returned for a while to the land of my youthful apprenticeship—South-West Africa, where, before long, I was resuming old acquaintances, and making new ones, among my erstwhile enemies, the Germans.

I was, incidentally, now married, having met my wife Roma at a Savoy Hotel party during one of my wartime leaves. Not for us, however, any settled domestic routine. I had a roving job with a famous commercial enterprise, and by 1927 we were being packed off to South America; the next six years I was to spend bustling around the Argentine, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay.

Everywhere I made discreet enquiries about the considerable German communities in South America, and about their widespread activities. The place was the proverbial hotbed of intrigue and espionage, complete with exotic women, ruthless undercover men, fabulous parties of diplomats and businessmen and secret agents working in the embassies, consulates and head offices of cities large and small.

These were truly the cloak, and sometimes dagger, days of pre-war years. So far as the German communities were concerned I soon learned that it was almost a matter of routine for a German national to be in touch with some Government or consular official who would be able to "use" his services, wherever he was working in South America, for whatever German-inspired purposes might be decreed.

Right up to the Second World War, in fact, Germany was paying great attention to the significance of the South American countries in matters of intelligence and espionage; and, by 1933, when I returned to England, I possessed a fairly good picture of the ideas for German tactics throughout South America in the event of war. Before many months had passed I was to realise the startling scope of those tactics during a tour covering thousands of miles of Germany in the months when Adolf Hitler was commencing his stranglehold on the government of the country.

While working in South America I was concerned at one stage with the settlement of a number of emigrant Germans in the Argentine; in this, as in various trading matters, my services were of some use to German officialdom. When, in 1933, during my first big tour of Germany, I was passing through Stuttgart, it was natural for me to call upon a certain Captain Schmidt, who headed an organisation known as the "Colonial Institute". With him I discussed a scheme for the emigration of two hundred families from Germany to South America, and Schmidt announced that he would see what could be done about putting the plan to the government. For several years afterwards I was able to keep in touch with him.

What intrigued me more than anything else, however, was the discovery that the Captain's busy little "Colonial Institute" was in fact an important centre of control for the activities of Germans living overseas. Later, it became the active information centre for directing the work of agents and fifth columnists in many parts of the world, notably in Africa and South America.

During one of several visits I paid to his office, I was amused to observe a significant item of clerical efficiency. A few minutes after being shown into his room, a girl secretary emerged from the outer office bearing a ruled index card which she placed on his desk. Schmidt, toying with the card while we talked, made certain I did not read what was inscribed on it, but not before I had caught a glimpse of the typewritten name "Schottland". In the files of Germany's intelligence service I was well, if not truly, documented.

During my tour in 1933 and again in 1935 I found opportunities galore for watching the growth of Nazism, the rise to power of its personalities, and the fantastic precision and efficiency with which every phase of the "movement's" activities was constantly organised. I saw the first of those mammoth Nazi rallies at Nuremberg. I talked with the German Minister of Agriculture and other government leaders. I watched the labourers of the roadmaking parties—organised like units in the Kaiser's army, drawing pay and rations in military fashion, and drilling with their shovels as if they were rifles.

From a large variety of German friends, Jewish and otherwise, I was learning by 1935 how the shape of the Gestapo and the SS was being evolved. And so, by 1937, again visiting Germany, I watched the spectacle of a country gone mad.

It was about this time that I called on an old friend from South Africa—Albert Voigts, one of four brothers who had gone, years before, to trade with the natives in the bush. Now a man of considerable wealth, living with his family, including two sons, in a luxurious home at Bad Neubad, near Frankfurt, he was not only in poor health but sick at heart. It seemed that his sons had espoused the Nazi cause with a deplorable enthusiasm; he loathed their bubbling praise for the training, the plans and the prospects for a Germany supreme in the future.

Albert told me a good deal about mutual friends who had been disposed of, and I recall his words as we parted. "Well, Scotland, we shall not meet again. And I for one will not be sorry to escape the shameful day of seeing my country ruined by this lot of criminals now in power."

I could not help thinking of his despair when, a few weeks later, I was honoured—if that is the word—by a surprise meeting with the arch-criminal of them all: Adolf Hitler, the Fuehrer.

This bizarre encounter had its origins in a meeting with yet another old acquaintance from the days of my association with the Germans in South-West Africa. My friend Herr K., who is no longer alive, was living in a pleasant house outside Munich, where I took tea with him one day and was puzzled by his persistent questioning about my South African experiences.

"I want you to tell me," he said, "all you can remember of your work during the Hottentot Wars and especially about your relationship with the German colonial administrators."

To complete the story to his satisfaction I had to stay to dinner, continuing the monologue over coffee and brandies. I could not imagine the purpose of it all, but gave my analysis, together with a strong opinion of the German officials as colonial bosses, citing their failures and shortcomings in considerable detail. Herr K. seemed well content.

Next day, the mystery deepened, for he telephoned to say he would appreciate some clarification on certain points; that some interested colleagues would also like to hear my views; a car would be at my hotel in twenty minutes to bring me to his house.

In the drawing-room the silver coffee service was on the table and a half-dozen chairs were placed around the table as if company were expected. The "company" arrived soon enough. As coffee was brought in and about to be poured, the door opened. In walked Hitler with two bespectacled associates whose names were not mentioned when I was introduced.

The Fuehrer was strangely direct and purposeful in his attitude. Unsmiling, he looked at and through me, almost searching, it seemed, for some specific item of information about my character and expecting to find it through his scrutiny. His opening words were certainly unexpected.

"Sit here, please," he ordered, indicating one of the chairs. I felt some amusement at this immediate command over the furniture in another man's house. On sitting down, however, the object was clear, for the strong light in the room fell directly on my head. Hitler sat at the lower end of the long table while our host, at the top, dispensed the coffee.

Then came surprise number two. Coffee was poured into the cups and handed to the two men and to me, but the Fuehrer was given a separate jug on a small silver tray, and a plate of plain biscuits which he proceeded to nibble throughout our interview.

He began by asking how many years I had spent in German South-West Africa, whether I was still an army officer, and what was my age. Then he turned to South America. How did

I fare in the Argentine; did I like the people there; and how did I get on with the German community?

I answered, perhaps a trifle non-committally, and then he snapped: "You settled a number of Germans out there, didn't you? I hope you got on better with them than with Dr. Seitz."

An interesting thrust this, for Seitz had been the German Colonial Governor years before, and my relations with him had never been cordial.

Discussion now centred on what Hitler termed the German colonial problem. "South-West Africa is a rich country. It should come back to German control," he said.

With this I disagreed. "Your German residents there simply do not want the return of the old stiff-necked officials telling them how to run their farms and businesses."

"What stiff-necked officials?" asked Hitler, raising his eyebrows.

Wondering if he possessed any sense of humour, I replied with a question. "Did you ever meet Herr Governor Seitz?"

At this Hitler pulled a face, showing the faintest flicker of a smile as he said: "Yes, I know what you mean."

We talked about colonies for quite a while and, having nothing to lose, I put my views forcibly. Hitler then rose from his chair, as did his two henchmen, neither having spoken a word since we were introduced. For a few seconds, he plucked at his lower lip, then he turned abruptly, picked up his gloves and strode to the door.

Pausing in the doorway, Adolf Hitler spoke his last words to me. "You are an ingenious man, Schottland. Now I can understand the reports we have on our files about you."

My host followed the Fuehrer and his silent pair from the room.

When Herr K. returned, he put his fingers to his lips as if the "Leader" might even have the power to overhear our talk from afar. Then he took my arm, walked me to the window and said: "This is a wonderful view from here, don't you think?"

He seemed nervous, but elated. "I'm glad you've had the honour of meeting our Fuehrer in my home," he said. "But I hope you will treat this meeting as highly confidential. Please

do not report on it to a soul, and especially not to the newspapers.”

Neither then nor at any other time was I able to discover what had brought about the visit of Adolf Hitler. My surmise was that the first talk with Herr K. had been recorded through some hidden microphone; the Fuehrer had probably heard it, or read it, and declared his wish for a meeting. At all events, it was a most diverting day.

Wherever I travelled in Germany there were to be found many old comrades from the Orange River days—including Germans with whom I had served in the Kaiser's army some thirty years back—who would give me news, comment and behind-the-scenes information on the fast-moving state of the Third Reich, some of them pro-, others firmly anti-Nazi.

And on my leisurely round, travelling on trains for short distances, stopping to pay business or social calls, I saw for myself how the new SS men pursued their duties of keeping close contact with the civilian population—with eyes and ears on all that was said or done.

In particular I watched with fascination the demeanour of a hand-picked team of Customs control officers, as they were called, operating on the trains that carried visitors and travellers in and out of Germany. Theirs was indeed a cleverly-organised service, and only through their efficient system of polite bribery could one take anything of value out of the country.

The chief interest of these days, however, lay in the fashioning of the SS and the Gestapo. Two Berlin civil servants of my acquaintance were typical examples of the “better-class” Nazi product recruited into the new régime through a carefully organised campaign.

To understand this development it was necessary to look into the infancy of the Hitlerite organisations. The Nazis, it should be remembered, rose to power in a Germany that was already riddled by lawless gangs, political gangs coercing the voters by threats, intimidation, theft, violence and even murder. After the blood bath of 1934, the Fuehrer and his chiefs sought ways of consolidating their powers on two fronts. The first was

economic, and meant still further manipulation of the country's banking and investments, commerce and currency.

The second was in the vital realm of security. The podgy Hermann Goering, as master of Prussia, had already formed for his own protection that secret state police called the *Geheime Staat Polizei*—Gestapo. Working with and alongside them were the official plain-clothes police known as the *Kriminal Polizei*—Kripo. And the third force consisted of protective troops or bodyguards for the political bosses, including Hitler—the *Schutz Staffel*, or SS.

The real expansion occurred when the control of Hermann's Gestapo was transferred to the hands of the vicious Heinrich Himmler, who controlled the SS. By 1935 the Gestapo was well established in every major town, and then, by appointing his own police chiefs to control the Kripo as well as Gestapo affairs, the entire criminal life of the country came under Himmler's direction. Always, however, it was the Gestapo taking care of subversive elements, of the Communists, of the Jews, of all who were to be consigned to the concentration camps—and of all the ugly arrangements for murder, of which there were plenty.

The first of Himmler's Gestapo recruits under the new order had been thugs from the SS; indeed they were the loutish, unwanted gangsters of the organisation. By 1936 it was decided that what was sorely needed in the Gestapo was the better-educated type of man. Himmler launched a campaign, therefore, to recruit from the high schools, from the civil service, from the legal and other professions, men who would be capable of filling the senior posts and turning the Gestapo into the truly effective force in German affairs which it soon became.

Before long, civil servants and others were being given the SS equivalent of the rank of army captain or even major on the understanding that they would become effective working members of the Gestapo. As officers they merely had a "police" grade, but the clever device of granting them the equivalent of SS officer status, not to mention equivalent pay, and the enviable social cachet of a title which was always prized by every German, attracted thousands of middle-class and profes-

sional men who saw that their future under the Nazi régime would thus be more secure.

Three years before the outbreak of the Second World War, I was convinced on the basis of hard factual evidence that a major aggression by the new Germany was inevitable. In theory, the Regular Army consisted of 100,000 men, as permitted by the terms of the Geneva Convention, but hundreds of thousands more were being trained under cover. One of Hitler's conjuring tricks involved a blatant falsification of the army registers. There were indeed 100,000 permitted names on the list—but often enough a single name cloaked the military training of four or five different men.

The enemies of Nazism, Jewish or non-Jewish, were being disposed of with ruthless speed. In addition, vast sums of money were being made available to engineering firms engaged on the production of armaments. Throughout Europe and South America and in many other parts of the world, Nazi intelligence men were at work, and from sources of information on both sides of the fence I was learning, with some alarm, about the fantastic scale of the plans for setting up penal camps by the hundred, outside as well as inside Germany, in order to deal in true Nazi fashion with all who hindered their schemes for an ever-expanding Third Reich.

Among the high-ranking army officers of the 'thirties was a certain Jewish colonel called Morgenthau. I met him early in 1936. He was a serving soldier, chief of staff at army headquarters at Württemberg, a man of about thirty-eight. He gave me a significant item of personal news. He had been summarily dismissed and given twenty-four hours' notice not only to quit the German Army but to clear out of the country.

For two hours we discussed the military situation and the meaning of his dismissal. Morgenthau in 1936 expressed the entirely correct view that this action against him was one of the preludes to Nazi aggression. "I am considered unreliable," he told me, "and it is obvious that I must be got rid of."

The colonel was lucky to escape the fate of so many of his fellow-Jews. He might well have gone to the concentration camp, but his commanding officer personally intervened with Hitler and obtained permission for him to leave the country.

The reason for this concession? Doubtless that the German colonel was a cousin of no less a figure than Mr. Morgenthau who was Financial Secretary of the United States Government. The Nazis presumably wanted no trouble with America on such an issue.

Back in England, in 1937, I wrote a lengthy paper which I submitted to the War Office in Whitehall, offering to lecture—free of charge!—to the officer cadets at Sandhurst or anywhere else on general military intelligence. I recalled the manpower work I had carried out during the First World War, analysed what would have to be done to understand the German manpower position in the next war, touched upon the great importance of the new German Army being formed by the SS, and drew attention among other points to the SS lack of discipline as compared with the regular forces.

It is fair to add that the War Office at this time had their own detailed knowledge of conditions existing in Germany, but I was all the time anxious to grasp every opportunity to publicise the need for an effective British Intelligence service in the field. During the war of 1914–18 we had had our first corps of intelligence officers; but when that war ended, the green tabs and cap bands of British Intelligence were cast away—the corps in fact was among the first to come under the axe of peacetime economy. Its resuscitation now seemed to be a matter of the most extreme urgency.

I made one more trip to Germany, just a year before the outbreak of the war for which, over five busy years, I had watched the Nazis preparing. Then, for a few months of comparative peace, I returned to London, where my wife and I were enjoying our first settled home, overlooking the lake and trees and flowerbeds of Regent's Park.

I was getting on for sixty and it seemed to me that I had earned a rest. It was unlikely that a man of my years would be once again called up for military service. My captain's tunic, my Sam Browne belt, were still in good order, but the trousers no longer fitted and the cap was frayed. I did not guess that I would soon be taking the tube to Leicester Square and walking into Moss Bros. to inspect their officers' kit.

Chapter Five

THE GREAT DEVIZES PLOT

No escape story of the Second World War was more daring in concept, more fantastic, more ambitious, more hopelessly fanatical than that of the prisoners of Devizes.

It began with a bold master-plan for a mass breakout of German POWs from prison camps in wartime Britain. It continued with the brutal, almost ritual murder of a captive German by other captive Germans. It included an extraordinary project for an armed sweep by the escaping men through hundreds of miles of built-up England, from the West Country to the Midlands and then across Yorkshire to the East Coast. It ended with the trial, conviction and hanging of five of the ringleaders. Among the last acts of the guilty Germans before they went to the gallows was to write me a letter of thanks, expressing their appreciation of British justice and fair treatment.

Nonsensical their schemes may have been, but there was no doubting the solemn, ruthless purpose in the minds of the men who planned the big breakaway from Devizes Camp, Wiltshire, during the Christmas festivities of 1944.

At this period the POW camp was on loan to the United States intelligence staff for training their new drafts in the arts of interrogation. Progress of the war was such that many people in England, even German prisoners, were marking their calendars and laying bets on probable dates for the end of hostilities. Peace, and victory over Hitler, it seemed, were just around the corner.

Not so, however, in the brains of recently-arrived German prisoners from France, many of them strong Nazis, who were interned at the Devizes camp. These men were optimistically debating the counter-measures which would be unleashed on

the advancing armies of the Allied forces as soon as the Fuehrer decided to deal them his masterly death blow. Against this odd background of belief in the coming "defeat" of the Allies, a small group of zealous German prisoners formed themselves into the traditional Escape Committee, and got to work. The time was early December, 1944.

Once the committee was established, day-to-day planning had to be adapted to camp routine. Meetings, difficult to organise at the best of times, were held in the German sergeant-major's office, where a good deal of camp duty was normally carried out, so that the presence of ten or more prisoners was unlikely to attract suspicion. Before long, dozens of prisoners, sworn to secrecy, were performing various allotted tasks in accordance with a master-plan.

Two men who had discovered a weak spot in the camp fencing were detailed to survey the roads and the lie of the land just outside the premises. Others carefully noted the sites where lorries and trucks were parked. Some checked the position of food stores and arms stores. Everyone was ordered to examine the condition of doors and padlocks.

As the month of December advanced, it was decided that zero hour should be fixed for a day during Christmas week when the prison camp guards would be depleted by the leave rota, while people generally would be preoccupied with holiday preparations. At a final briefing conference, committee members put the last touches of polish on the schedule of operations.

It was a startling programme. At zero hour the key men would begin the mass breakout. A selected handful of lorry drivers would proceed to the car park, commandeer the vehicles and drive at once to the arms store, where guns would be picked up. A second squad would make their way to the food stores, collect as many provisions as possible in a few minutes, then hurry to the trucks, where they would load the rations.

The specially-briefed men who were to act as "guides" would wait with the vehicles until the now well-armed prisoners were ready to move off. Each guide had his map of the route to be followed. They would, said the committee, have to risk the possibility of a few being shot while the break was made.

From Devizes they would head north. The goal was



The London Cage: A mansion in Kensington Palace Gardens. Colonel Scotland's office was on the first floor (extreme left).

Below—British intelligence officers conduct a demonstration in the technique of interrogating a prisoner.





The butcher of Paradis—Fritz Knoechlein of the S.S. Totenkopf ("Death's Head") Division.

Sheffield. Here, a similar mass break from another German POW camp would be staged, and the two escaping forces would join together as a hostile column. Fighting their way if necessary, they would drive due east towards the Wash. A radio station would by this time have been attacked and taken over, and from there a message flashed to Bremen where the German fleet of small warships would be asked to proceed at once to the East Coast of England to pick up the miniature army of escaping men.

Thus the strange plan . . . Heaven knows what was designed to happen after the rescue by warship. Even in failure, this fantasy was not so wild that it did not succeed in shaking the POW authorities. For prison camp guards all over the country, Christmas leave was stopped as soon as the Devizes plot was detected.

How was it all uncovered and the alarm sounded? A careless word concerning the arms store, overheard by one of the German-speaking American intelligence officers, was in fact the first blunder. A large-scale investigation was ordered on the spot, and in searching the German prisoners' quarters they discovered an impressive array of hand weapons. The examination and questioning provided our American friends with tip-top training material.

Eventually, some thirty men who had played more or less key rôles in the escape plot were individually interrogated. The leaders were brought to our interrogation headquarters in London, where we were able to piece the story together. Out of this questioning, however, emerged the fact that many of the young, ardent and now very angry Nazis among them were convinced that a traitor in the ranks had given them away.

Suspicion fell upon two men. One, the ringleader of the escape project, who had in fact admitted to us that our story of the plot was correct, was given a firm and well-deserved thrashing by four prisoners who were permitted to question him; their violence against him was stopped before it went very far.

The second man, who was a comparatively liberal-minded anti-Nazi called Wolfgang Rosterg, was innocent of the

suspected betrayal. Rosterg, as it happened, was among the batch of Devizes prisoners who were then sent to Comrie Camp, Scotland, a safe, secure spot whose location and control discouraged all dreams of dramatic escapes. At Comrie, many tough Nazis were being held. And here, Rosterg committed the error of stirring up trouble among his own comrades by voicing criticisms of German operations in the Ardennes, the reports of which he read out to his hut-mates from the English newspapers.

One night, after lights out, a prisoners' committee bent on vengeance dragged Rosterg from his bed, stood him in front of a table and, constituting themselves as his judges, held an all-night "trial", punctuated by spells of physical punishment.

Finally, the Germans produced a rope which they had hidden in their hut the previous day. Rosterg, a young man in his late twenties, was then tied up. Against a rowdy background of shouting to drown any cries he might make, he was dragged more dead than alive to the wash-room. There, over the water pipes, his body was hung and he was left to die in considerable agony before the camp staff discovered the crime.

As head of the POW interrogation system, I was technically not concerned with this crime committed inside Britain. True, my staff had assisted in the discovery of the camp break at Devizes, but in the subsequent investigation and trial of the Comrie murderers we confined ourselves to providing German-speaking interpreters.

My personal intervention in the case concerned a somewhat curious snag when it came to the defence of the five accused men. They were insisting, it seemed, on being represented in court by one of their fellow-prisoners, and had flatly rejected the services of the skilled British lawyer who had been instructed to appear for them.

The general commanding the London area asked me, therefore, to use my personal influence with the accused prisoners to get them to change their views on this point. So, after several meetings with the men, who were housed in different parts of the southern region, I managed with some difficulty to persuade them that no German lawyer could adequately defend them in a British court unless he spoke perfect English; and, indeed,

that it was in their own interests to allow themselves to be defended by British counsel.

The five men—Pallme Koenig, Jupp Mertens, and SS men Kurt Zuelsdorf, Heinz Brueling, Joachim Golitz—eventually accepted my argument. When the case ended, Koenig handed me a letter signed on behalf of the guilty five. It contained the following paragraph:

“I would like, in the name of my comrades and in my own name, to express to you, sir, our gratitude. Due to your advice we asked for British officers to be assigned to us for our defence, and we have been agreeably surprised. . . .”

The British court had done its duty. Its notion of justice was very different from the mockery of that “trial” at Comrie camp, but it seemed grimly appropriate that those who carried out the hanging of Wolfgang Rosterg should meet their deaths by the same process.

Although the episodes of Comrie and Devizes were enacted when the war was nearing its end, I relate them at this point because they sharply illustrate some of the problems of “personality” I encountered during these war years when thousands of German prisoners were passing through my hands. These men ranged from the worst types of Nazi criminal to the upper-crust playboy opposing Hitler for his own superficial reasons, and the concentration camp inmate opposing Hitler for *his* own reasons, along with the highest-ranking officers of the German Army. Their successful interrogation demanded a familiarity with the workings of German minds, the habits of German life, and the influences of Nazi doctrine upon the conduct of military affairs.

Among German air force prisoners, for example, there were some nicely varied types of character. There were the Luftwaffe men who were shot down; and there were those—quite a number in the early part of the war—who calmly landed their planes on British soil in order to escape the rigours of Hitler’s war. Of this last group I remember particularly an amiable young man who touched down at Margate. The boy stepped out of the plane literally carrying his weekend suitcase with pyjamas, towel, razor—ready and willing to be taken to the

nearest POW camp. He was typical of those who had no intention of being killed or maimed in battle; they were mostly well-to-do young men who saw no future for themselves under the Nazi régime and considered that they were fully entitled to take whatever action would most rapidly remove them from the field of war.

In the main, our German prisoners caused us few troubles—until, later in the war, we began picking up large numbers of Nazis from the SS regiments in North Africa. These men provoked many a headache, for when they were brought to England it was their habit to form themselves in captivity into SS “units”, sometimes fomenting disturbances which shook both the discipline and the administration of the POW camps where they were housed.

At the other extreme were the former inmates of concentration camps, men who in their homeland had undergone severe punishment by the Nazis, and were then drafted into the army and shipped off to North Africa, where, as serving soldiers, many became the ill-treated servants of SS officers.

There was a grim fascination in watching the reactions of all parties whenever the ex-inmates of concentration camps were brought face to face with SS men in the equalitarian atmosphere of the British interrogation room. Perhaps the most striking of these encounters concerned a pair of prisoners from the *Germania* division, captured in North Africa and brought to London. One day, the men were conducted into an interrogation room, where they stood in front of the long table behind which sat two or three of my officers ready to carry out the questioning. During the interrogation a third German prisoner was brought into the room. The first pair stood in silence while the officers consulted their papers. The third man was then asked to state his full name, which he did. At this, the other two Germans turned and stared. Then they gazed at each other with an oddly decisive air of mutual understanding. Before another word could be uttered the two men sprang upon their fellow-prisoner, forced him to the ground and began beating him up before our interrogation officers had recovered from their surprise.

In came the guards to pull the attackers away and disentangle

the struggling trio on the floor. The three Germans, including a now slightly battered and bleeding individual, were then held apart while we carried out a quick investigation into the mysterious assault.

It was a tale of ironic coincidence. Before being sent to North Africa the two obstreperous prisoners had been incarcerated in Dachau concentration camp. The third man was an ex-Dachau guard from whom both had received vile treatment. They had vowed to kill him if ever they met him again. Now, years afterwards, that bitter encounter (though not, needless to add, the planned revenge) was taking place in a usually peaceful interrogation room near Hyde Park.

For myself, the Second World War proved to be an unexpectedly active phase. At the outbreak I was, as I have said, nearly sixty years old. My written paper on intelligence matters which I had sent to the War Office, together with an offer to lecture Britain's would-be recruits, had produced a mere post-card of acknowledgement. So, at the end of 1939, I was all set to find myself a job in a munitions factory and let young England do the fighting.

By the beginning of 1940, with the war nearly six months old, I had accepted more or less gracefully the idea that I was militarily unemployable. Nothing was more remote from my mind than the thought that I would be called up and kept in service long after the war until I had almost reached the age of seventy.

But one day a telephone call from the War Office demanded my prompt attendance for an interview. There I learned that General Mason-Macfarlane, chief of our intelligence in the field, had flashed a message from France asking that I be called in without delay to give advice on the subject of interrogation.

"A plane will take you from Hendon at 8.30 tomorrow morning, and you will report to GHQ Intelligence as soon as you arrive at Arras," said the man in Whitehall.

"In civilian clothes?" I enquired.

"In uniform," came the answer.

So, on a windy March morning, I flew to France. Carrying major's crowns on my twenty-five-year-old tunic (in 1918 I had

left the army as a captain, which was then the highest rank in the Intelligence Corps), I landed at Arras, reported to GHQ and straightaway got to work.

My first job was to travel about selecting suitable sites for POW cages where interrogation could be carried out. Then came a series of trips to the various HQs to instruct their personnel in the duties of prisoner treatment, feeding, sleeping, employment, recreation and, as always, interrogation.

Surprising as it may seem, the fact was that, at the beginning of the Second World War, the British Army was woefully ill-equipped for the skilled tasks of interrogation, security and intelligence in the field. The shortage of trained officers and men continued indeed right up to the end of hostilities, but the position at the start of the war was pathetically inadequate. With the exception of one or two men who had gained an apprenticeship in intelligence from 1914 to 1918, no serving officer of 1939 had received any training. In France, even on the administrative side, the men responsible for supplies and materials appeared to have little or no idea about how the taking of war prisoners would at once affect their duties during field operations. At more than one HQ in France I was astonished by the simplicity of some of the problems, while at GHQ in Arras I found that the personnel consisted largely of writers and journalists, some possessing a 1914 background of security work (known as "IB"), but none with knowledge or training in military intelligence (known as "IA").

With an office at Dieppe, and one officer on my staff, I was put in charge of security for the area during the spring of 1940, a job which had to be performed in addition to my work of organising interrogation centres. We had a POW cage just outside Dieppe, but no prisoners. Soon, however, the German attack intensified, and apart from the prisoners brought in we had also to face the problems produced by a stream of refugees. As security officer I now had to co-operate with the French in vetting any suspects among the scurrying refugees. All ears were cocked towards men and women who were heard to be speaking exceptionally bad French, and these were sent to me for questioning, a process in which I aimed to test their knowledge of German.

These and similar chores continued until those fateful days of May and early June forced the great withdrawal and the Dunkirk evacuation.

At Dieppe the commandant called a conference. "We must get out within two days," he declared.

No one knew precisely how far the German advance had gone, and as the situation grew hourly more tense I asked for instructions about the fate of my German prisoners, of whom I now had eighteen in the Dieppe Cage.

The commandant's reply was terse. "That's your affair."

I decided to try my luck with the naval officer in charge at Dieppe; asking if he would join me in commandeering a pair of trawlers to take our prisoners, ourselves and our equipment back to England. Within a few hours we had four Belgian fishing vessels at our joint disposal, of which I got two. I put nine prisoners under guard on each trawler and we left Dieppe in a storm of bombing.

The trip lasted all night and on reaching Newhaven early next morning I was at first refused permission to land, and ordered to head for Southampton. I took one look at the nine disgruntled, angry German officers aboard my trawler. We had no food and we were all exhausted and nervy. It seemed to me at that moment that it would be the simplest job in the world for the prisoners on both our vessels to overpower our small, tired guard, take complete control and sail themselves and us back across the Channel to some German-occupied port on the French coast. I decided not to comply with the order to proceed to Southampton, and waited until permission was granted for a landing at Newhaven.

While we waited, I gave the guards loud orders, spoken in German, that any prisoner attempting to escape or trying any tricks of violence should be shot at once. With the Germans in truculent mood it was the only thing to do; at least it kept them quiet. Once ashore, I handed them over to the Newhaven guard and drove immediately to London to make my report to the War Office.

After Dunkirk there was no time for relaxation, for it soon became obvious that there was a real possibility of a Nazi invasion of England. So, after a few weeks spent in recruiting

and training officers for my expanding unit, which was then entitled the Prisoner of War Interrogation Section (PWIS), I began touring Britain to organise interrogation centres up and down the country. Nine places were chosen, from southern England to the north of Scotland. A cage was set up for each command area, and manned by officers who had trained with me. A POW cage, it should be noted, is a place for holding prisoners before they are sent to their POW *camp*. While in the cage they may be interrogated; once they are posted to a camp, interrogation is not, as a rule, carried further.

In London, our cage was also an important transit camp, and later in the war became the headquarters for questioning suspected war criminals, at which point my unit changed its title and became known as the War Crimes Investigation Unit (WCIU).

At Doncaster we used a portion of the racecourse as our cage. At Catterick and Loughborough the cages were in bare fields. In Edinburgh we had a particularly well laid-out affair. At Preston the cage was the football ground. Generally, we preferred racecourses, where there was usually plenty of space and good accommodation for prisoners and staff.

It was a full-time job, travelling, organising, interrogating, clearing up disciplinary troubles, watching for signs of escape plans, and for ever hunting those precious pieces of information from prisoners to aid the efforts of Britain and our allies.

There was the case of the five hundred German prisoners who went on strike, threatening the safety and security of an entire camp with some three thousand POWs in it. This trouble started when batches of prisoners were detailed for work outside the camp premises. Following a lead given by their tougher Nazi camp mates, hundreds of prisoners were soon involved in a mass refusal to co-operate. They refused to work, or to draw rations. It looked a dangerous situation, liable at any moment to become more menacing if the hunger strike spread. Clearly, in wartime, prisoners could not be permitted to dictate the arrangements for camp routine and work; nevertheless, it was a delicate position demanding extreme care.

It was decided that I should visit the camp to see what could be done. These were no civilian workers legitimately protesting

against conditions or pay, but captive men who must be approached, I reflected, as disciplined soldiers—and German soldiers at that.

I addressed them in German. It was vitally necessary to convince the younger Nazis that there was no hope of getting away with their high-handed action, and in this I believe I was successful; at all events I appeared to persuade the bulk of the men that their case was lost and that their most sensible course was to co-operate in the life of the camp as normal, well-behaved prisoners.

There was also the startling case of Rudolf Hess, the Fuehrer's deputy, who landed a plane in Scotland near the home of the Duke of Hamilton, the man he had come to see. There followed widespread speculation about the genuineness of Rudolf Hess's mission, said to be in the nature of a direct personal approach from Hitler designed to speed the ending of the war. This much, however, is in my view certain. There could be no question of Hess having flown from Germany on his own initiative. It is highly improbable that he could have taken his aircraft without the express knowledge and concurrence of three men: Adolf Hitler, Hermann Goering and Field-Marshal Kesselring or some equally high-ranking air force officer.

Hitler, in short, would have to grant Goering permission for the trip, and for a machine, with extra tanks, to be made available. This work could only be done with the knowledge of someone like Kesselring (then Air Chief of Staff). And Goering, also, would have to issue precise instructions not only for the aircraft's route and planning, but for the temporary abatement of the German anti-aircraft units while Hess was on his way out.

Among the tasks of my associates was an interrogation of the deputy Fuehrer—but the information that Rudolf Hess brought, and what transpired during the questioning, remains a closely-kept secret.

Then there was the case of the Boy Who Wouldn't Stop Laughing. This young man, very schoolboyish in appearance and character, was among the few dozen survivors when the German warship *Bismarck* was sunk in the Atlantic during

1941. He was brought to the Cage in London, where his interrogation began. His response to all questions, however, was an uncontrolled giggle. Even the simplest and most commonplace queries touched off a burst of laughter. Finally, my officers gave him up, complaining they could make no headway against the boy's mirth, but expressing their conviction that he possessed some kind of useful information if only we could succeed in extracting it.

I decided to try my hand. To begin, I kept off the subject of the *Bismarck* and surprised him, I imagine, by asking about his family at home, his hobbies, what kind of books he enjoyed, what games he played, his school background and so on. At all this he smiled, but talked, nevertheless, with complete calm. Then I put to him some point concerning his duties on the *Bismarck*. Straightaway the laughter began again. It was as if, for all his childishness, he possessed some intuitive spark, some reflex action, prompting this queer method of avoiding a subject which he had been taught to guard with secrecy.

This time when he laughed, however, I laughed with him. I put further questions, chuckling for all I was worth as if the whole affair were some rollicking antic between boys, not to be taken seriously. Then, very suddenly, his laughter ceased and we were talking about a Danzig training school for mine specialists. The boy (one of several hundred youngsters sent on the *Bismarck* for sea-going experience) had recently passed an examination at the school, and was thoroughly up-to-date on the latest types of German mines. Shortly afterwards, with the help of a friend who was an expert in the subject, we were able to gain some excellent data. By the time his interrogation was completed the young German seemed to be regarding himself solemnly as a quite important personage.

There was also the case of the *Graf Spee* spy. Exceedingly well-organised over many years, the Nazi spy ring in Brazil and other parts of South America was a first-class menace to the Allied cause from the moment the war began. The main idea was that Germans sitting in South American ports would be able, by means of a coding system employing special coding machines, somewhat like typewriters, to send regular cabled

messages to Germany disclosing the movements not only of our battleships and war vessels of all kinds but also of our civilian shipping.

In this fashion, the U-boat campaign against our food supplies was designed to become a truly deadly weapon. And to handle this weapon effectively it was essential to maintain a large-scale spying organisation throughout the South American countries.

One of the rôles of the German battleship *Graf Spee*, sunk in the River Plate during an historic Christmas operation by the Royal Navy, was to land Nazi agents in South America. Aboard the *Graf Spee* was a dark, thickset German merchant seaman, travelling as a civilian, who stepped ashore at Montevideo. Later, I guessed that he must have carried out a tour of the principal ports, contacting German agents, and the information he carried would doubtless have proved invaluable to the enemy if he had succeeded in making his way back to Europe.

He was picked up, however, during his homeward journey on a Spanish ship and brought to England for questioning. By the time I saw him in London it was clear that he had been well-schooled in the arts of sidestepping the objects of interrogation. He remained adamant that he had no information to impart.

I set to work. What I sorely needed was the up-to-date picture of conditions which only he could provide, and it was important that he should not guess that my own information was in fact hopelessly outdated, stemming from my last visit in 1935. He talked slowly, astutely. Altogether it was necessary to hold some fifteen interviews, but patience won its proverbial reward. I saw he was gradually reaching the conclusion that I possessed a comprehensive expert knowledge both of the German spy rings and of the distribution of useful Germans throughout those territories. My familiarity with the geography of the place was clearly better than his own, and before long—believing that I knew even the people with whom he had been in contact—he resigned himself to meeting my questions.

These, then, were a few of the pursuits of a British Intelligence man during the Second World War. There were many

other activities, including the organisation of raiding parties and the training of invasion units in the problems of guarding prisoners.

Then, at the end, came the most massive task of all—the investigation of War Crimes.

Chapter Six

MASS MURDER AT PARADIS

WHEN Fritz Knoechlein was first ushered into my room at the London Cage, our Kensington Palace Gardens interrogation HQ near Hyde Park, I studied his face for a full minute before speaking. Here was a Nazi of the first order, the worst order, a German who had dedicated himself to brutality; irresponsible in possession of power, ruthless in execution; a man who represented everything that Adolf Hitler desired in an officer serving the Third Reich.

Not that I divined all this during those sixty seconds of scrutiny, for by the time I had made the acquaintance of Fritz Knoechlein there was an impressive mass of evidence pointing to his leading rôle in one of the ugliest crimes of the Second World War.

Nearly nine years elapsed before the guilty Knoechlein went to the gallows, but throughout those nine years his face was never expunged from the mind's eye of a certain wrinkled French peasant, Madame Romanie Castel, whose recognition of the SS criminal was to become an important factor in his conviction.

On October 12, 1948, this old Frenchwoman stepped from the witness box and hobbled towards the centre of a Hamburg military courtroom. She turned slowly, peering at the faces around her, at the lawyers, interpreters, clerks, court officials and witnesses alike. . . . Then, suddenly, she pointed the forefinger of a thin, bony hand at Fritz Knoechlein, crying, "That is him, that is the man!"

It was the most telling moment, certainly the most tense, of a trial for which I and my officers of the War Crimes Investigation Unit had conducted a two-years' probe, searching, questioning, finally moulding into legal shape the events of 1940, and the guilt of Fritz Knoechlein.

PARADIS . . . what bitterness and shock, what angry amazement, lay in the mention of that name, a simple, sleepy French village in the area of the Pas de Calais, only a few score miles from English soil. There at Paradis all but two of one hundred British soldiers had been murdered in a field after their formal surrender one summer's afternoon towards the end of May 1940.

The pair who escaped—Albert Pooley and William O'Callaghan, both privates in the Royal Norfolk Regiment—had won their freedom under conditions so fantastic as to resemble some far-fetched tale of fiction. To make matters worse, our work of investigation was to be tenfold hampered by one incredible, though indisputable, fact. When the story of the murders was first related in Britain . . . no one in authority had believed it. With the war ended, it seemed a remote chance that the Paradis criminal would ever be brought to justice. More than five years had gone by. The German Army, like the British, had fought in a hundred-and-one different spots. Units were scattered. Our wanted men might well be dead, or imprisoned in Russia, or otherwise untraceable. We had no knowledge that there were any survivors from the Paradis outrage. Clearly, we were about to embark on a gargantuan task.

What happened in and around the village of Paradis? What were the facts of the story that was unfolded years later? And how did we pursue the hunt for the criminals?

By the late summer of 1945 our work on war crimes had begun. Our prisoner-of-war interrogation unit, which had grown in strength to a total of more than forty officers and NCOs, all German-speaking experts, was being reconstituted, or at any rate retitled, as the War Crimes Investigation Unit. And soon we were combing France, Germany, Belgium, Holland and Norway for evidence of atrocious felonies known to have been committed by members of the German forces—by the SS and Gestapo in particular—and by men from the rank of general downwards.

My first intimation that some unspeakable acts had been perpetrated in the area of Paradis was barely more than a rumour, but from the French authorities came firmer hints that some-

thing approaching a massacre had taken place in the village, and at once we set to work. We realised that a major war crime had been committed, but not yet did we know how dreadful was its quality nor how startling the events surrounding it.

Among the first jobs I gave my investigating teams was to seek out, in the POW camps in Britain, Germany, or wherever SS men were being held during these postwar months, any members of the infamous Totenkopf ("Death's Head") Division, for these, according to our sources of information, were probably responsible for the crime. It was not long before we were able to discover precisely which German units had been fighting around Paradis during the last few days of May 1940.

We learned, for example, that the 2nd Infantry Regiment of the Totenkopf Division had crossed La Bassée Canal and fought the British furiously, receiving and inflicting heavy casualties during savage encounters around the villages of Paradis and Le Cornet Malo.

From the people and police of the Paradis district came evidence establishing further facts of the crime. Our investigating officers saw the meadow into which our soldiers were said to have been marched before being shot down by machine-gun fire. Photographs were taken of the bullet-scarred barn wall in front of which the men were said to have fallen. We saw the house which had been battalion headquarters for the Royal Norfolks. We saw the communal grave site where the men had first been thrown, and the churchyard burial ground where the French had later transferred their bodies.

From Madame Duquesne-Creton, sister-in-law of the farmer upon whose land the murders took place, we heard that two British soldiers had miraculously survived from the hundred shot down. After the killing she had fed and sheltered this pair on her own farm not far away.

On went the search, with our widest net being cast among the German prisoners in Allied hands. Discovery of the Paradis murders and the clear implication of the SS Totenkopf Division meant that every man held by the Allies in Germany was now of great potential importance to our investigation. My officers, therefore, were firmly instructed to stay on the lookout for such

prisoners, to interrogate them with care, and to ship across to England any man who might possibly help to unravel the mystery.

Eventually, more than a hundred Totenkopf and other SS officers and men passed through our interrogation network. Many were brought to the London Cage, where nearly thirty were able to supply us with information concerning this SS crime. Some of these, we discovered, had either seen the bodies of the slaughtered men of the Norfolks, or had heard of the outrage soon afterwards.

Two factors above all were now clear. The field of suspicion had narrowed to No. 3 Company of the Totenkopf 2nd Infantry Regiment; and the man who planned the outrage was assuredly Captain Fritz Knoechlein. Despite a certain enraged determination to track him down, I knew there were many pitfalls to be faced before we got our man; but already I had in my hands German soldiers who were present at the crime, who were, moreover, willing to appear in court as material witnesses; in this prospect I found some satisfaction while the investigation continued. One man, Theodore Emke, had been a member of the machine-gun unit employed in the massacre. He claimed he had not actually manned the gun, declaring that his superior, a Lieutenant Petrie, had taken over. But Emke had heard the order to fire. What was even more important, he could testify that the decisive shout had come from company commander Knoechlein.

This was what I had been waiting for. Here at last was someone, and a German soldier at that, who had watched the British troops being herded into the field, heard the instructions for their execution, seen their bodies fall—and could identify the officer in charge. Such was the character of the damning evidence to be furnished by Emke when the trial took place. Other prisoners confirmed much that we already knew of the events following the slaughter.

And in France, Madame Castel told of her flight from the battle along La Bassée Canal, of how she reached Paradis to hide, along with seventeen other refugees, on a farm some 150 yards from the meadow where the machine-gunning occurred. Later, this collection of refugees was discovered by the Ger-

mans. Old Madame Castel and the other terrified women were forced by a certain SS officer to go down on their knees. What was she doing here, where was she going, had she seen any British, was she sheltering them . . . ? Seeming half-mad in his rage, the man threatened her with a pistol, and spoke of killing her as a "spy".

She would never forget, she told us, the face of the German who threatened her. Nor did she let us down when the time came. The man, we were convinced, was Knoechlein of the Totenkopf, that same Knoechlein who was one of the SS officers standing at the entrance to the meadow—the man who gave the order to fire.

We traced him in Germany. By the time Captain Knoechlein came into our hands in the winter of 1946 he was a lieutenant-colonel.

In his mid-thirties, toughly-built, having a distinctly unpleasant face, his eyes and mouth full of inhumanity, he was like many of his Totenkopf officer-comrades—a professional product of the concentration camps; in his case the training in brutality was gained at Dachau, where he had held the rank of company commander.

He was brought into The Cage one October morning and produced to me by one of my officers as something of a prize. Our normal procedure would have been a careful interrogation, followed by the prisoner's own written statement if he cared to make one. But not in the case of Fritz Knoechlein. Without hesitation, I decided to take not a word in writing from him, despite the fact that it was my firm practice throughout the war crimes investigations to obtain a prisoner's own written statement of the circumstances surrounding whatever incidents he was being called upon to describe.

On this day even my own assistant was somewhat surprised by my insistence on the course to be followed. "Knoechlein," I began, "we have all the information we need about you. You are not to make a statement. I don't want it. I repeat, no written statement will be accepted from you, nor will you be interrogated. Nor will you remain here. You will go to a camp where your identity will not be known unless you yourself choose to tell people why you are in England."

To the officer I said: "This man is extremely precious to us. Everyone here must treat him accordingly. He is to appear in court on a major charge, and I will have nothing said about his treatment in the London Cage which will give him the slightest chance to make a complaint."

I knew the case against Knoechlein was, as they say, "sewn up". My usual purpose in obtaining written statements was to assist the building up of our material for presentation to the trial court, but of all the hundreds of prisoners who went through my hands Knoechlein seemed to me to require the most astute tactics; he was guilty, and I knew it; the facts were almost ready to be displayed, and I wanted no confusing documents with the aid of which he might try to wriggle from the net.

There were, however, further figures of major importance to be unearthed, notably those two Englishmen who had inexplicably contrived to save themselves from that heap of shattered bodies shot down at Paradis.

With little hope of success I had enquired of the Royal Norfolk Regiment about possible survivors of their 2nd Battalion from the fighting in France, and had received the addresses of the two returned prisoners about whom we had already been informed by Madame Creton—Albert Pooley and William O'Callaghan. Both men were summoned to the London Cage.

Soon the story was almost complete; soon we knew most of the facts about that grim day following the battles along the French canal. It made a startling narrative. On May 24, 1940, a battalion of the Royal Norfolk Regiment and a battalion of Royal Scots moved into position along La Bassée Canal near the town of Bethune. On the south side of the canal lay the SS Totenkopf Division. Thirty-six hours later, after desperate fighting, with house-to-house and hand-to-hand engagements, the Totenkopf "Death's Head" forces were suffering heavily. But far, far heavier was their onslaught, for these advancing SS regiments powerfully outnumbered the British. Before long, their numbers hopelessly weakened and communications almost non-existent, the remnants of the Royal Norfolks were confined around the village of Paradis.

By the morning of May 27, when the great withdrawal in the "little ships" from Dunkirk was already under way, a grim last stand was being made by the wounded, tattered "A" Company of the 2nd Battalion Royal Norfolk Regiment, commanded by Major L. C. D. Ryder.

In all, about a hundred men congregated in a cowhouse of the Duries Farm on the Rue de Paradis. Farm buildings and houses around them were blazing. As soon as their position was seen to be utterly lost, the C.O. ordered the destruction of all documents, equipment, signalling gear; everything. Finally, Major Ryder called on his men to surrender, and told a sergeant-major to bring a white towel and tie it to a rifle.

Carrying the soiled white signal of surrender, the sergeant-major and a few of the men went through the door at the rear of the cowhouse, which backed on to a meadow. The Germans in the ditches not far away had ceased their firing. Suddenly a machine-gun opened up. The sergeant-major fell; so did several others. The white flag, it seemed, was not to be respected. After a while, however, when the guns remained silent, another attempt was made. Once more a towel was displayed and, slowly, with arms raised above their heads, the men of the Norfolks filed out of the cowhouse, the still healthy among them supporting their wounded comrades.

As the battle-worn hundred walked forward into the meadow the Germans emerged, surrounding them. First, they were ordered to get down on their knees, hands upon heads. Then they were searched and their personal equipment piled on the grass. During the next hour, isolated cases of deliberate brutality occurred—rifle butts smashed into some men's faces, others merely kicked.

Next, the Englishmen were lined up in threes and marched into the Rue de Paradis until, not far from a red-brick farm, they were turned away from the road through a gate leading to another meadow. Into the field they trudged, in the direction of a barn. A group of German officers watched from the gate nearby.

Then came a shouted order: FIRE! Two machine-guns went immediately into action. The British began to fall, some killed

outright, some screaming their agony as bullets ripped their bodies.

Soon the meadow was strewn with the dead and wounded. When the last man fell the firing stopped. To ensure that none survived, there came the final acts of murder as German officers with fixed bayonets or pistols went along the ranks killing all who showed a sign of life. When this deed of horror was finished the machine-guns were packed up and the German troops departed.

The murderers did not know that among that heap of a hundred bodies were two wounded soldiers still living and breathing. Pooley and O'Callaghan, after a long spell of tortured misery lying among the bodies of their friends and fellow-soldiers, managed to crawl from the scene of horror. They found a hiding place in a pigsty on the Creton farm, where they were discovered and cared for by Madame Duquesne-Creton. Eventually they landed at Bethune Hospital, in the hands of the Germans. Pooley, in particularly bad shape, had severe leg wounds, and was later repatriated to England. O'Callaghan, wounded in the arm, remained in German hands as a POW till the war's end.

When these two, who had undergone considerable suffering, were brought to me in London towards the end of 1946, it seemed fantastic that their story had not reached me earlier.

"Why did you not report all this before?" I asked Pooley, who was a sick man, greatly depressed in spirit.

"I did report it, sir," said he.

"To whom?" I demanded.

"To the army interrogation officers when I came back from Germany."

"When was this?" I enquired.

"In 1943."

When the full significance of this announcement dawned upon me I could not suppress my anger. No less than three years, three wasted years, had passed since Albert Pooley related his first-hand account of the massacre. However improbable the tale sounded, it should have been the subject of an official report. Prompt action would at least have sparked off prompt

investigation. Instead, this soldier who had returned, so to speak, from the grave, was disbelieved.

I did my best to trace the source of this crass carelessness on the part of army officialdom, but my quest was unsuccessful. Pooley had been urged to forget his fantastic tale, told that his years of suffering and confinement had produced a condition of "barbed wire-itis", that such atrocities against men who formally laid down their arms were plainly impossible even from the Hitlerite German Army, and baldly informed that his best course was to try, like a sensible chap, to recover from his admittedly unpleasant experiences of battle.

More than once Albert Pooley recounted the facts, but to no avail. And the time came, as it might to any man, when he began to doubt his own recollection of the outrage; until, in fact, he was almost ready to accept the notion that the murders at Paradis might after all be some vile composition of his imagination.

It was perhaps hardly surprising that when the two men were brought to The Cage nearly six years after their gruesome experience in France, they were depressed by the prospect of being dragged through the peacetime machinery of a lengthy investigation and trial. I assured them, however, that we were determined to pursue the case, put the guilty man into court, and get a conviction; that was a task for which we needed their co-operation. Pooley and O'Callaghan agreed to appear as witnesses.

For Pooley, at least, there was one encouragement to counteract the frustration which had consumed him. He returned to Paradis to satisfy himself of the reality; he saw the graves of his comrades and the field of the crime; and he met once more the brave Frenchwoman, Madame Creton, who had given the two soldiers shelter, food and care.

Among our witnesses was another valuable German—Emil Stuerzbecher, who had been in 1940 an SS lieutenant in the 2nd Infantry Regiment of the Totenkopf Division. From this man came not only an outline, from the German viewpoint, of the heavy fighting along La Bassée Canal, but also a significant account of the demented attitude of Knoechlein on matters concerning the British.

Two days before the attack upon Paradis, Knoechlein had announced to his comrades in the mess that he had no intention of taking prisoners; for his part he would kill any British soldier who came into his hands. There was, it seemed, no limit to his maniacal behaviour on this subject, for at one stage of the fighting he had demanded the handing over of a batch of wounded British prisoners who were being evacuated to the rear by a German medical officer. Stuerzbecher reported: "Knoechlein came running from the road, shouting loudly and very excited. He roared at the m.o. and myself, 'These prisoners are nothing to do with you. They belong to me.' My first impression was that he had gone mad, and only after some argument during which he insisted that the prisoners were his did he quieten down."

In addition, Stuerzbecher had witnessed Knoechlein's deliberate shooting down of a number of captured Royal Scots at Le Cornet Malo shortly before the incident at Paradis.

Piece by piece, the pattern of guilt was taking shape. It was no easy task to persuade men of the SS to talk freely about the crime, and in one case alone, that of Emke, there were many interrogations spread over two weeks.

For one thing, there was always the power of the SS oath of loyalty to the person of Hitler, which meant that a man dedicated his whole life, putting his personal service to the Fuehrer even before service to his country or to his family.

Throughout our enquiry I was very conscious that many of the happenings in SS units were sacred and secret, never to be disclosed on penalty of death. There was no saving any man who broke his oath, and often as not the penalty would also be paid by his family. The SS had their own courts, ruthless and illegal. And even when the war was over we found prisoners so intimidated by their training in secrecy that it was often impossible to persuade them to disclose what they knew about a particular crime; there were many who would not talk even to save their own skins.

The incident at Paradis, at all events, was ordered to be regarded as a State secret of the highest importance; this was done on the instructions of divisional commander Van Eicke, with the personal support of Himmler. Fortunately, several SS

Totenkopf men did talk, and self-preservation was doubtless their chief motive. As for Stuerzbecher, a comparatively liberal-minded man, it seemed to me that he was largely motivated by an intense personal hatred of Knoechlein and his methods. Stuerzbecher was in fact one of the few exceptions among the thug personalities who made up that unsoldierly Totenkopf force.

The trial of Fritz Knoechlein, held in the Curiohaus at Hamburg, opened on October 11, 1948, before a court of six. Its president was Lt.-Colonel E. C. Van der Kiste, of the Essex Regiment. The others were Mr. F. Honig (the Judge Advocate), Major P. Witty, Major C. Champion, Captain J. E. Tracey and Captain A. Preston. Mr. T. Field-Fisher was the prosecuting counsel, and counsel for the defence was a Dr. Uhde.

Witnesses supporting the charge (which was presented by me) were Pooley and O'Callaghan, together with the old Frenchwoman, Madame Castel, and a number of former SS men who were serving at Paradis during 1940.

In the small, dark courtroom the indictment was read out. "The accused Fritz Knoechlein, a German national, in the charge of the Hamburg Garrison Unit, pursuant to Regulation 4 for the Trial of War Criminals, is charged with committing a war crime in that he, in the vicinity of Paradis, Pas-de-Calais, France, on or about May 27, 1940, was concerned in the killing of about ninety prisoners-of-war. . . ."

As the words came over I found myself musing upon some words of my own, introducing our war crimes report on the investigation. Nearly two years earlier I had stated our objective in the following terms: "The bringing to justice of this brutal crime should become a crusade with every man serving in the Army today. Let us comb through those still in custody, again and again, and those who at any time served in the Totenkopf Regiments in 1940. . . . Let us not rest until at least a number of the murderers have appeared in court and we can thus have the satisfaction of telling a still disbelieving world about the enemy we escaped from only by struggling on to the end."

Well, we did not rest. Although we were not now bringing

to justice "a number of murderers", we were at least on the road to convicting one murderer. This was of the highest importance, for the crime at Paradis was a crime against men in military uniform who had fought well and bravely, who gave up only when they found further sacrifice useless, who had destroyed their weapons and thrown themselves upon the mercy of their opponents. By all the laws of warfare, and under the terms of the Geneva Convention governing the treatment of prisoners, they were entitled to be regarded as members of the enemy nation, legally restrained, placed in properly conducted camps, and maintained in security and health until the end of the war.

The only manner of bringing their terrible fate to the notice of the world—and the German people—was to find someone we could put into court on public trial. Knoechlein, as the instigator of murder, was the one man we could justly name.

Not that the case was all plain sailing. We were faced with, among other inanities, that forty-year-old red herring from the First World War—the accusation that British troops had illegally used "dum-dum" ammunition (bullets with flattened, filed, blunted or otherwise distorted points, causing excessive injuries). We were faced with suggestions that the British flag of surrender at Paradis had a swastika painted upon it; that our own troops had fired on German prisoners; and a "horrificed" protest against the so-called ill-treatment of our accused man. We were faced with everything from flat denials to blank silences.

But we had our own trump cards in the Hamburg courtroom. Albert Pooley and William O'Callaghan made their unique contribution as the only men alive—the only Englishmen, that is—able to identify Fritz Knoechlein as the officer in charge at Paradis. Emil Stuerzbecher and Theodor Emke told of their respective rôles on the day of the outrage—one bearing proof of Knoechlein's murderous intentions, the other of his murderous deeds.

Old Madame Castel, now seventy-two, in her stiff brocade black gown, pointed the accusing finger. With no shadow of doubt she recognised Knoechlein as that blustering German who had threatened her with death as a "spy", wildly brandish-

ing his pistol over the old peasant woman's kneeling figure. We were able to produce not only human accusers. There were also captured German documents and letters, revealing the deep concern of the High Command about the murderous and illegal tactics of the despised SS Totenkopf rabble.

The trial brought out an interesting attempt at justification of his criminal acts by Knoechlein. Indeed, he astutely succeeded in confusing the Court by a suggestion that his actions were fully legalised under the old German law which provided for the setting-up of a "court" *on the field of battle*.

This notion seemed to befog everyone, and I was called upon to explain it. Fortunately, I had long been familiar with even these archaic echoes of German military affairs. Such a court, if it were convened, would be an emergency device under the title of *Standgericht* (literally, a "standing court"). I knew well enough that no such court could possibly have been arranged, or at least that *if* it were convened, its existence would be outrageously unlawful.

This three-man *Standgericht* of the German Army was a queer survival from the centuries-old era of tribal armies; of the days when, in order to prevent the breakdown of military discipline in the field, three men took emergency decisions when the army was in jeopardy while fighting. But the *Standgericht* could only be legal while battle was in progress. It had no status whatsoever once hostilities were ended. And since, as at Paradis, we were concerned with the fate of men who had laid down their arms and surrendered, no standing court could have been *legally* contemplated. Knoechlein's plea was plainly nonsensical and, presumably, a trick designed to save his skin. It was precisely to avert such tricks that I had refused to accept written statements from him while he was kept in England.

I knew, too, that he had not himself conceived the *Standgericht* ruse but had been "put up to it" by a German colonel, Baum, while the pair were confined in their camp in England. And when, one day during 1947, I returned from Europe where I had been engaged in another war crimes trial, I found that Knoechlein had succeeded in having himself brought to London where he wished to make a statement. He had in fact written his tale, but I declined it—without thanks.

During his last nights in London, before his trial at Hamburg, Fritz Knoechlein gave us an example of what might have been regarded in another man as pitiful behaviour, but from him it seemed merely contemptible. He began shrieking in a half-crazed fashion, so that the guards at the London Cage were at a loss to know how to control him. At one stage the local police called in to enquire why such a din was emanating from sedate Kensington Palace Gardens.

The next night I removed everything from his room, even his bed—leaving only a mattress on the floor—to ensure that he did himself no damage before being flown to Hamburg. I also paraded him in front of the entire staff and gave him a severe reprimand for his shameful behaviour. Then I went to my office to write a detailed report on Knoechlein's movements—and attitudes—from the day he was brought to England. This report went to our lawyers, for I half-expected that this murderer might well decide, at the last moment, to complain of ill-treatment. In this I was not disappointed, for when the trial was almost over he delivered himself of a lame allegation that he had been "tortured" while at The Cage in London.

Two days later, Knoechlein, the killer of nearly a hundred British soldiers who had fought bravely and surrendered, was found guilty. He was sentenced to death and executed at Hamburg early in 1948—a little less than nine years after the war crime with which he was charged.

I was satisfied but far from elated as I left the courtroom. It seemed to me that one piece of idiocy had had far-reaching and tragic consequences. If only Private Pooley's version of the Paradis murders had been intelligently received in 1943, an immediate investigation could have been ordered through the International Court in Geneva. And with a worldwide spotlight on the crimes of the SS, further Nazi atrocities upon prisoners-of-war might have been averted. Even Hitler was not above the effects of world indignation, and the influence of international opinion over one crime might well have resulted in his calling a halt to the more savage breaches of international law by barbarian elements in his Gestapo and SS.

My thoughts at this time were equally troubled by the

problems thrown up in the very work I was being called upon to perform. What did it all mean, this investigation of war crimes, and what were the implications for the future? It was, one might say, a logical development that we intelligence officers who had been in close touch with German prisoners throughout the war should now take over the task of probing the known war crimes when victory arrived.

We were presumably experts in all matters German, and good judges of German character and military affairs. We were the people chosen to conduct enquiries among suspects and others, exploring the degrees of guilt and where the guilt lay. True enough, but in practice it turned out to be a lamentably unwise procedure. And this unwisdom was revealed over and over again in the course of war crime trials, where intelligence officers and intelligence methods became a byword not only throughout the enemy press, but in our own, and in the newspapers of the rest of the world. Constantly into the headlines went the names of individual officers employed in a service which by its nature should avoid publicity.

As I went on my homeward journey from Hamburg I reflected that if it were necessary to have international laws to govern the principles of war it was now perhaps high time to create "legal units" to control the complex operation of these laws.

If the experience of the Second World War is any guide, then commanders of troops in the future may be well advised to insist on taking their lawyers along for expert guidance. Crime is the lawyer's business. It is certainly not the business of an army intelligence man.

Chapter Seven

UNPUNISHED CRIMES OF WORLD WAR TWO

IT is a galling fact that many a Nazi war criminal went scot-free for lack of evidence, lack of witnesses, lack of information—or just lack of determination on the part of far too many of the authorities concerned with investigation and trials. Here, then, is the story of three of the unsolved, or rather unpunished, crimes of the Second World War. It is no proud narrative, but one that should be told again and again, and never forgotten.

Although the major work of investigating war crimes did not begin until the end of the war, the origin of my connection with those investigations went back to 1944, the year of the Allied invasion before victory. Soon after the D-Day landings on the French coast there began a series of atrocities which seemed hardly credible when they were discovered soon afterwards. The major war crimes, it should be remembered, did not come to light until the victory in 1945. We were shocked, therefore, when we heard of the butchery in 1944.

This time it was not the British but the Canadian forces who came up against Nazi ruthlessness. And this time the Germans responsible were not the low-grade elements of Totenkopf regiments but the Hitler Youth Division, in which an important pair of leading Nazi lights were General Kurt Meyer, its commander, and Major-General Moenke, who commanded one of its regiments. Both these men had been officers of the SS *Leibstandarte*—Hitler's bodyguard—when the war began.

It was in the area of Caen that the first of a string of murders took place. On the first day of contact between the Canadians and the Hitler Youth forces, three Canadian soldiers were luckless enough to be captured early in the morning. These men were at once sent to the Germans' forward regimental com-

mand post. There they made the acquaintance of Major-General Moenke, who spoke English. Accompanied by three of his regimental police officers, Moenke himself carried out an interrogation of the Canadian trio. When this was done the policemen, acting on instructions, marched the three Canadians a short distance along the line. Reaching a shell-hole, the prisoners were ordered to halt. They stood on the edge, doubtless wondering where they would next be taken. Without further ado they were shot where they stood; their bodies tumbled into the hole and the Germans departed. Forty-eight hours later the advancing Canadian troops came upon the bodies of their comrades.

This was only the beginning. During the two weeks or so of fighting in the region, the retreating Hitler Jugend indulged themselves still further. One day seventeen Canadian prisoners were brought into the grounds of the Château d'Audrai immediately after their capture.

A group of French people then witnessed the new attitude to war, which seemed to be that if you could not defeat your enemy the next best thing was to wipe out all those taken prisoner. At all events the seventeen Canadians were shot and buried in the grounds of the château.

Shortly afterwards, and not far away, another twenty-three were murdered and buried by a signals unit of the Hitler Youth. In the village of Meon, behind the front, an ugly ordeal before death was being planned for seven more captured men. For an entire day these seven Canadians were interrogated. Then, in the evening, they were conducted by Germans of the transport unit into an orchard. Watched by French civilians from the roadway nearby, the seven were forced to dig a grave. They were shot, and thrown in.

And so it went on. All the way back to Germany, wherever Allied soldiers met the Hitler Youth, death by shooting was the fate of many who were taken prisoner. Towards the end of 1944 when these murders were known to have been committed, I was called in to assist the work of a small commission of inquiry which had been appointed to investigate the crimes against the Canadians. This was our introduction, as a military unit, into a new sphere of activity, and straight away I was disturbed by

the somewhat watery fashion in which the whole business of investigation was being approached.

In custody we already had General Kurt Meyer, commander of the Hitler Youth Division, and he was the first German officer to be interrogated on the subject of war crimes. The commission, in its own quiet way, got to work.

When I learned, however, of the polite and painfully slow procedure adopted by the well-meaning commission, I was not surprised that they had made no headway with a man of Meyer's calibre. Not one of the three investigators could speak the German language, and every word of each interview was being laboriously translated. Their young Canadian interpreter had the impossible task of dealing with it all, sentence by sentence, so that the wily Meyer, who understood a good deal of English, had all the time in the world to prepare his answers. Naturally, he was able to confuse and generally evade the purpose of their interrogation. Rarely did he answer questions directly, or even civilly, and before long I was asked to see what could be done with him.

It did not take me many minutes, once we were face to face, to get the measure of General Kurt Meyer. Thin, keen-faced and somewhat nervy, he spoke in what I usually called "shrieking" German tones. His was the voice which in the beer-garden always rose above everyone else's—I had met many such. Nor was it difficult to imagine how it was that the aggressive Meyer, active, self-possessed, barely forty years old, had so rapidly advanced from the rank of captain to lieutenant-general in the space of a few years. A bully of a commander, he was in the best tradition of the SS Leibstandarte Division in which he had served before bossing the Hitler Jugend.

Speaking in German, I put a series of questions for which I demanded direct and unequivocal answers. When, in fact, he became evasive, I made no attempt to hide my impatience. If he hesitated, or hedged in his replies, I snapped: "Come on, Meyer, let's hear it, and no nonsense" . . . "Out with it, Meyer; you know exactly what I'm getting at" . . . and so on.

The commission sat in silence while the pair of us barked at each other in German. When the session ended I took the

three officials to my room for a conference, where I was interested to hear their reactions.

The British official was plainly fearful of my unceremonious tactics. The American was frankly impressed, and said so, a view with which the Canadian agreed. "I think your approach to Germans of this kind is probably correct. I see no hope of *our* being able to do anything useful in this field. This commission method of enquiry is obviously no good," the American declared. I pointed out that my direct methods of questioning were based on a long experience of handling people in the German Army. Certainly no German soldier, and no SS man, would regard such brusqueness as unusual, for this above all was the disciplinary attitude they fully understood.

I did not see the commission again, but formed strong opinions about the methods adopted towards the crimes against Canadian troops. The murders in the Caen area had, after all, been discovered a mere matter of hours after the crime. As for the killings in other parts of northern France, there were French as well as German witnesses. Meyer, as commander of the Hitler Youth Division whose units had committed these witnessed murders, might with advantage have been taken back to France, and tried on the spot by court martial.

This much was certain: speed was the one essential requirement of successful investigation. Yet no less than three months was allowed to elapse before the commission again sat. Meyer was kept in custody while the wheels slowly turned. And nearly two years later, when the war was over and the news of the atrocities gone "cold", he was tried by the Canadians, convicted and sentenced to death.

Not that General Kurt Meyer went to the gallows. True, he was found guilty of war crimes committed by units under his command, but the sentence was never carried out.

* * *

Throughout these days of frustration I was constantly struck by the attitudes of the Allied nations towards the successful prosecution of war crimes. There were, unhappily, wide differences in the diligence, speed and determination displayed by

the authorities of Britain, the United States, France, Canada, Poland and other countries.

For the British I think it may truthfully be claimed that our perseverance and efficiency remained at a high level, but it was not always thus in other quarters. In one case, concerning the Poles, I was, to put it mildly, flabbergasted by the turn of events following certain preliminary investigations carried out by my unit in Norway. This was the story of Gauleiter Sporenburg, who finished the war with the SS rank equivalent to lieutenant-general. An early Nazi enthusiast and a protégé of Himmler, Sporenburg went up the ladder through one petty appointment after another; and when war broke out he was given the highly-paid post of Gauleiter in a portion of western Poland and Prussia.

The uglier tasks of the concentration camp developments, the recruitment of forced labour, and the plans for wholesale liquidation of Polish Jews were his chief assignments. He became expert in all three of these barbarities. Towards the end of the war it was his job to arrange the elimination of some 46,000 Poles, mostly Jewish, confined in his concentration camps. The organisation of this slaughter is perhaps the Second World War's most striking example of macabre efficiency. In parties of hundreds at a time, he had the victims brought from the concentration camp into fields where they were forced to dig large trenches. Each crowd of men, women and children was then shot—and buried in the trench dug by the party of their comrades who preceded them. This massacre went on for twenty-four hours until 46,000 human beings had been disposed of.

Sporenburg made a quick getaway as the war drew to a close. We tracked him down in Norway, where he was identified, arrested as a suspected war criminal, interrogated and brought to London for special investigation. We kept him at London Cage for three weeks. When he first stood in front of me I found it impossible to restrain some expression of revulsion; of course, my personal opinion of my prisoners was totally irrelevant to the tasks in hand, though I confess I informed Sporenburg that day that he was the vilest creature I had ever encountered.

About forty-five, thickset, and without strength in his face, he was a poorly-educated but crudely ambitious man who won his high place in the Gestapo by showing an eager willingness to undertake even the most unpleasant of Nazi duties. But he was a cowed, demoralised individual when we received him at The Cage. Moreover, he was prepared to provide us with the fullest possible record not only of his own career but of the mass murders in which he had been concerned.

He gave us, in writing, a detailed statement of the crime and its origin. He told how the order for the massacre had come from Himmler. He told how he himself had demanded the use of SS troops to seal off the area of the killings. Together with the information my officers had secured from him while in Norway it made one of the completest, if most sordid, dossiers we had ever compiled.

That, so far as we in London were concerned, was the end of our responsibility for him. If he were to be charged as a war criminal, the Poles would be his judges. Sporenburg was despatched, therefore, to Poland. A British escort took him out of England, into Germany, and a Polish escort assumed control at Hamburg. Sporenburg's statement, and all the relevant documents, went with him. It was then 1947.

Two years later, in Hamburg, I met a Mr. Acht who had been the Polish war crimes representative in London and responsible for the ex-gauleiter's reception.

"What have you done with Sporenburg?" I asked.

"We were unable to try him," coolly answered the short, dark, well-spoken Mr. Acht.

"Why?" I asked, astonished at this news.

"Because the evidence he handed you in London has never reached us," declared Mr. Acht.

Scarcely believing my ears, I listened while he explained that Sporenburg had disclaimed responsibility for the crime, declaring that his evidence, in the form of letters, had been kept by the authorities *in London*.

I told Mr. Acht, in forceful terms, that the suggestion was fantastic and nonsensical, and that the documents had been delivered into Polish hands on the day that Sporenburg was handed over. At this he shrugged his shoulders.

I then added my opinion that if Sporenburg was not being sent for trial, the reason was doubtless that the Polish authorities had decided they did not want him tried.

Forty-six thousand Poles murdered. Most of them, I reflected, were Jews, and Poland had never easily tolerated her Jews.

The Gauleiter, Sporenburg, had compiled a comprehensive account of a crime in which, to say the least, he was sufficiently implicated to warrant an investigation and legal action by the nation whose people had been done to death.

The war was over. The war criminals were being detected. The guilty, or some of them, were being tried, convicted and punished. In Poland, 46,000 victims of a single crime.

* * *

Adolf Hitler's favourite SS commander, Sepp Dietrich, cut a decidedly sorry figure when we questioned him during 1946. In fact, the man who began his Nazi life as Hitler's chauffeur, and finished the war as a group commander of armies in the field, disclosed a miserable wreck of a personality during his interrogation.

In wailing tones, repeating his words constantly, all he could say was: "I spent the day in a ditch" . . . "I know nothing of any shootings" . . . "I spent the day in the ditch."

Dietrich was one of the German officers who figured in what was perhaps the most disappointing of our investigations into war crimes that went unpunished. I can think of no case which filled me with deeper frustration.

At Wormhoud, in northern France, sixty British soldiers had lost their lives at the hands of the SS Leibstandarte Regiment during May 1940, and in the end we were beaten largely by the compelling force of the SS oath of secrecy. We had laboured to bring at least a number of guilty Germans into court to answer the charge of murder. We succeeded in tracking down many who must have known the full story of the outrage, but failed to pin the crime.

These were the facts eventually uncovered. On the morning of May 28, 1940, the Leibstandarte Regiment was advancing towards Dunkirk with the object of cutting off the retreating British forces. When they launched their attack around the

village of Wormhoud, however, they met some stubbornly brilliant resistance from the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, who were supported by a machine-gun company of the "Cheshires". The terrain offered a type of cover to suit the defending British, who encouraged the Germans to enter a variety of "trap areas" which our more experienced soldiers had prepared.

It was a losing battle, nevertheless, and by four o'clock in the afternoon most of the serious fighting was over, with some 150 British troops held prisoner. Yet still there were pockets of severe resistance in the village of Wormhoud, and just outside it.

The events that followed were to some extent governed by the strange disappearance, earlier that day, of Sepp Dietrich, the Leibstandarte C.O. In the morning, he and an adjutant had eagerly driven by car towards Wormhoud in the mistaken belief that their troops had already reached the village. On the road, they were fired upon by a British anti-tank gun. The car was set ablaze, its driver killed, and the two SS leaders crawled into a ditch at the roadside, finally seeking refuge in a drain. There they remained for the rest of the day, totally isolated and out of touch with their forces; it was an ironic touch that this was Dietrich's birthday.

In the belief that their C.O. had run into a trap, the SS troops pressed forward, only to meet heavy machine-gunning, and among their heavy casualties was the commander of their second battalion, who received fatal wounds.

This setback led to the promotion in the field of a certain Captain Moenke, who became battalion commander. And from that moment there was a decisive change in the Germans' treatment of captured British prisoners.

During this investigation it seemed that there was good reason for assuming that the SS Totenkopf murders of the Royal Norfolk prisoners at Paradis on the previous day, May 27, had been the subject of chit-chat which went over the air from the Totenkopf signals branch to the signals of the Leibstandarte, their sister unit, at Wormhoud. There was little doubt in my mind not only that Moenke knew what had happened at Paradis, but was himself not averse to the elimination of prisoners.

At all events, the British who were captured early in the day were interrogated and packed off in the normal manner to the security of a camp. Most of those who were taken during the afternoon suffered a grim fate. Some thirty-five men of the Royal Warwicks were paraded in a road, and while waiting were joined by other small groups until there were about fifty prisoners. The new battalion commander—Moenke—was enraged when he saw them. With much cursing he demanded to know why prisoners had been taken—against his orders. And getting no satisfactory answer, he strode off to confer with one of his company officers, a Captain Baum. Moenke then spoke to a signals squad officer, and gave orders that ten guards from the squad should take over the fifty prisoners.

These men mustered the prisoners into a rough column and ordered them along a farm track towards a shed about a mile away. Disabled prisoners who stumbled by the wayside were either shot at or prodded with bayonets to make them move faster.

Captain Allen, the Warwicks' C.O., protested when the guards began herding the British into the shed, where they were packed tight. Perhaps he realised what was about to happen. A few minutes later, the prisoners were a struggling and wounded mass inside the shed as hand grenades were tossed among them.

Captain Allen, grasping an injured man, dashed from the smoking hut into an adjoining wood, where the pair lay in a small pond. But soon an SS man appeared on the bank of the pool, opened fire and killed Allen. The other soldier, named Evans, was also hit; he slumped into the muddy water. Miraculously, he later recovered sufficiently to crawl away; he was picked up by a French farmer, who delivered him to a German Red Cross unit.

Meantime, the grenade-throwing at the shed was replaced by rifle fire. Several groups of men were dragged outside to be shot. Others were killed by rifle fire from the doorway. Somehow, a few were still surviving when the Germans left. How they existed in this ordeal, where they remained for several days, is a mystery.

The day of murder was not yet over, however. The village

was searched for odds and ends of escaping British, who were either shot, clubbed to death or stabbed. Four died in a petrol-soaked car which the SS men set on fire. As for Sepp Dietrich, commander of SS troops, he escaped from his undignified hide-away in the ditch, returning to his officers late in the afternoon, at which point he called for a report on the day's operations.

When Dietrich (who once saved Hitler's life during an attempt to shoot the Fuehrer) heard the story of the murders, he at once invoked the SS oath. Every officer present was sworn to silence. They in turn passed on the vow to the men under their command. So powerful was the fear of this oath that those who survived the war, and were captured and interrogated, maintained enough secrecy to baffle our experts and thwart all our hopes for a trial.

We had statements from the inhabitants of Wormhoud. We had the evidence of the British soldiers' graves. We had the grim accounts related by British survivors. We had the inadequate stories told by our captive Germans. Colonel Baum, the SS company commander whose unit had held prisoner at least a few dozen of the men who were murdered, was able to satisfy us that he was not personally responsible for issuing the orders that led to the outrage. Two of Baum's men, who formed part of the escort for the prisoners, were able to prove that they took no part in the shootings. From other German officers and men I failed to obtain anything of value that might lead to identification of the guilty party. In short, I had no case to present to the court.

One man we were never able to trace. He was said to have been in the eastern zone of Germany at the end of the war—Major-General Moenke. I am convinced that he was the man who could have assisted us, as the police say, in our enquiries.

Chapter Eight

“AN IMPOSSIBLE TALE”

IT was not surprising that nobody believed Hans Mueller, a young, cheeky, sandy-haired German prisoner-of-war, when he told the remarkable story of his escape from England. After all, it was a pretty far-fetched tale. Hans claimed not merely that he escaped from his work camp near Colchester, Essex, and returned to Germany, but also declared that he had been absent for more than a year . . . imprisoned by the Russians while escaping from East Berlin . . . escaped again . . . and smuggled himself back to England, where he was now calmly reporting for POW duties as if, for all the world, he had never quit the country.

A spirited, amiable, impudent youngster of no more than twenty-four, Hans was sent to London Cage during 1947 by the puzzled authorities at Colchester. After presenting himself at Colchester, he was identified as a missing prisoner and questioned, but when they heard his bizarre account of a whole year's absence, ending with the assertion that he had just stepped off a German ship docking at Ipswich, they decided that Hans warranted special enquiry. "It can't be true," said the camp officials. "And yet, he speaks no English, so where has he been these last twelve months?"

In London, when I first heard the brief outline of his supposed escapade, I roared with laughter. Busily engaged at this time on a variety of war crimes investigations, we were holding some of Hitler's most dangerous and despicable thugs. And the thought of a daring young man coolly outwitting the security arrangements of two nations was a welcome relief from the grim events of our everyday work.

I decided to give myself a busman's holiday by carrying out the interrogation. Not that I was inclined to accept his tale without careful scrutiny, for there were many postwar cases of

prisoners absenting themselves from camps in Britain, staying with new-found sweethearts in one place or another, and eventually being traced. I remembered, also, a certain plausible Englishman who was arrested while working as a porter at Liverpool Street railway station. *He* had claimed to be an escaped German prisoner—but on investigation was revealed as a thoroughly homegrown product determined at all costs to escape from a nagging wife. With a proper degree of wariness, therefore, I sent for Hans.

The moment he entered my room I was reminded of that race of likeable, sharp-witted boys of the Berlin streets, known as *Schusterjungen*. Hans was short, nondescript, yet with a gleaming humour in his face, and he seemed like a grown-up version of the astute little Berlin street arab who was up to all kinds of tricks in the days before Hitler began indoctrinating even the five-year-olds.

Five minutes later, listening to his comic Berlin accent and watching the easy, confident manner of his settling down in my office, smoking the cigarettes I offered, I knew my impression was not far wrong.

"Why are you here?" I asked him.

"I don't know," laughed Hans.

"Shall I tell you?" I said. "You've been hiding somewhere in England. All we want to know is where, and who was sheltering you."

"No, no, I was not in England," he said. "That's what they kept telling me at Colchester. But I did not stay here. I've been to Germany. I wanted to go home."

Almost anxiously he looked into my eyes as he spoke, and I knew he wanted me to believe him.

"Tell me about your movements, then. How did you get out of England, back to Germany? And what did you do when you arrived?"

"One day we were walking around Ipswich," he began, "just the three of us . . ." In great detail, he then told me the tale of his year's adventure, and long before it ended I felt he was speaking the truth.

Hans was among the thousands of German POWs organised in working parties around the farms and on similar jobs, easily

supervised, in different parts of England. By 1946, with the war over, prisoners were being repatriated, and those still waiting their turn were allowed a large measure of freedom. From Colchester, which had one of the biggest POW camps, many were leased to Essex farmers; the prisoners drew their weekly rations, were billeted on or near the farms, and loosely supervised by visiting officers; in general, the system worked satisfactorily. Hans and other prisoners were members of a party living away from their camp and working on farms in the Ipswich region, not far from the docks.

Life, however, had become intolerably monotonous for the restless Hans, who decided in company with two fellow-prisoners to investigate the chances of making a successful break for home. They knew that small German trading craft were sailing again between Hamburg and Ipswich, and their first move was to make a close study of security control at the docks.

Next, they spent several days watching the habits of the German crews who came into the cafés of Ipswich. Soon, they were being sympathetically advised as to the best methods of stowing away aboard one of the small ships. Then the trio procured for themselves the typical shirts and rough trousers worn by German seamen and, one afternoon, in company with the rest of a ship's crew, they walked calmly past the gate guard at the docks, chattering in German.

Hans and his friends hid in one of the dockside sheds until near sailing time. Not until the final check by dock police of the ship's papers did they emerge—to amble aboard as crew members, then to stow away, aided and abetted by several of the regular crew.

After midnight, when the ship was well outside the three-mile limit, the German seamen revealed the presence of this hidden trio to their captain, who was thoroughly angry and fearful.

"I'm not risking my job by trying to land you in Germany," he told Hans. "Either we now turn inshore and you swim back to the English coast, or you will jump into the river near Gluecksdorf; but you are not walking off my ship."

Undeterred, Hans at once agreed to go overboard near the

German shore; and with this promise the captain's fears subsided. Towards dawn, as the ship proceeded slowly up the River Elbe, three young men leaped over the side, swam a quarter-mile towards land, clambered, dripping, from the water and stepped upon German soil for the first time in several years.

They wasted no time. Hans' companions were from Bremen; he shook hands with them and off they went, leaving the Berlin boy to find his own way. He never saw them again. Far from feeling deserted, the roguish Hans was glad to become a lone wolf. Within the hour he was flirting with a servant girl at the kitchen door of a large house near the main road to Hamburg. The girl's only domestic colleague was a cook, who made coffee, gave him a dressing-gown while his clothes were dried, and agreed that he could stay the night. He remained, as it happened, for two or three days, learning about the new postwar life of Germany, talking to the local shopkeepers, generally getting the feel of his surroundings, and, in particular, watching the lorries and goods vans passing along the Hamburg road.

On the third night he said goodbye and thanks, his friends having collected 100 marks to help him on his way. Then he hitch-hiked a trip by lorry to Hamburg.

"I told the driver who and what I was," said Hans, "but when he heard I was trying to reach my home in East Berlin he shook his head and said I was crazy."

The driver took out his wallet, pushed a permit card in front of him and said: "Don't you realise you've simply got to have identity papers before you can travel anywhere? And without this card you would never get into the Russian Zone."

Hans was crestfallen. Somehow, he told me in London, he had put right out of his mind the problem of identity papers, believing that once in his homeland all would be well. The lorry driver dropped him at a café where he introduced him to a friend, saying: "Give him a lift to Hanover and see what you can do about documents."

It was easy enough to escape from England in 1946; and easy enough to land in Germany. What was wellnigh impossible was to live safely, travel, work, or draw allowances and rations,

without identity documents. And for all returned prisoners-of-war the normal process of demobilisation involved going through an official POW centre (*the Munster Lager*) before being formally registered and passed out—complete with documents.

Ignorant of all this, young Hans eventually reached Hanover, the great postwar centre of passes and identification papers, both genuine and forged. And there, in a certain café where traffic in illegal documents was already a celebrated well-established activity, he entered the next stage of his strange homeward journey.

"You're a damn fool to have left England without your papers," said a member of the forgery gang. "For those we could give you 200 marks" (then about £5).

"I didn't know," said Hans.

"Where do you want to go?"

"To East Berlin, where my mother lives."

At this the man laughed paternally. "You're an innocent sort of soldier, I must say, but I'll see what we can do for you; first, I'll have to go into conference, so come back in an hour."

For the next hour Hans walked the streets, returning to the café to learn that although no identity papers were forthcoming, the "management" were willing to provide him at least with the vital blue card that would carry him, as an assistant lorry driver, through to the Russian Zone of Berlin.

It was at this stage in the telling of Hans' tale that I finally made up my mind he was giving me nothing but the truth. I had posed a large number of questions about the city of Hanover to test him. Where was the bomb damage? What was the railway station like? What was the condition of such-and-such a street? And Hans answered them all as only a man who had seen the postwar city for himself could answer.

Armed with his blue card he hitch-hiked to Berlin, and once inside the city was truly at home. Without trouble he reached the north-eastern outskirts, walked into the house and greeted an astonished mother, who wept with joy at his return.

His homecoming, however, was no unmixed delight to her, a widow with three other children. Visits for inspection were frequently paid to houses in the district by Russian security

officials and, fearful for the whole family's safety, she insisted that he slept in a loft of the house, keeping out of sight, even in the daytime.

After nearly a month of secrecy, Hans declared such precautions unnecessary, and began visiting friends. A few days later he was persuading a local farmer to give him a job on the land. The farmer succeeded even in his effort to obtain an official work card for Hans, though he still possessed no identity papers. For a further four months life ran smoothly, until one day the farmer brought Hans a piece of news that was to send him scurrying into the most hazardous part of his escapade.

"You must clear out at once," he said firmly. "The Russians are going to make a big security check. I'm not having you on my land when they come."

Hans walked home, to find his mother equally determined to stay out of trouble. "I can't have you here in the house; it's too dangerous," she said. "Besides which you haven't even got a job now."

"Then what do you suggest?"

"Go to your grandmother's house at Dresden. You can stay on the farm, and you may be safe down there. Anyway, it'll be safer than Berlin."

So once more Hans was forced to hit the road, heading south. Dresden was more than a hundred miles distant and he walked most of the way. Germans in various parts of the countryside gave him occasional food and shelter, but the worst moments came when he found himself near the heavily-guarded border between east and west Germany.

More than once he aroused the suspicions of Russian guards. One evening, crossing a bridge, he was challenged and told to produce his identity card. Hans smiled at the Russian, pretending not to understand. "Wait here," said the guard, disappearing into a hut at the end of the bridge. But, almost before his back was turned, Hans was making a risky dash towards a narrow street only a few yards off.

As he reached the corner, they opened fire. Bullets pinged into the wall of the first house, but it was now almost dusk and he had a good hundred yards lead. He ran on, twisted and turned through a series of mercifully complex streets and alleys,

then suddenly emerged on a main road with plenty of traffic. Here his luck held. The first truck from which he thumbed a lift pulled up at the grass verge and its driver invited him to climb aboard. Barely ten minutes after the encounter with the guards he was speeding south again.

Twenty-four hours later he reached the little farm, which was really no more than a smallholding where his grandmother kept chickens, not far from the town of Dresden. Grannie listened to his story, agreed to let him remain, but warned: "On two conditions—you must help to look after the fowls, and you must leave immediately if the Russians come snooping."

Hans set to work, and by the time two contented months had gone by he was congratulating himself on the success of his bid for freedom. Then the Russians pounced. In a sudden check throughout the district, he was picked up together with a batch of other vagrants without papers, and whisked off to a prison camp for investigation.

But his buoyant spirits were not to be weakened by Soviet security measures, nor, it seemed, his determination to carry out in his own peculiar fashion the processes of return to civilian life. After a mere forty-eight hours behind barbed wire, Hans decided on yet another breakout, the most impudent of all.

"It was about two o'clock in the morning," he told me. "I had noticed the previous night that supervision by two Russian guards on the main gate seemed to be very lax. So I thought to myself, 'What can I lose?' and decided that if I were caught before reaching the gates I would just tell them I couldn't sleep and was taking a stroll!

"But I was luckier than I expected, for when I got near the gate after creeping slowly along the side of a hut—there were the guards fast asleep.

"I had to pass within five yards of them, and this was a trifle nerve-wracking, but in the end I got away."

By his look as he told it, he seemed to expect this nonchalant explanation to be taken at its face value. But here again I stopped him, to ask: "Were the gates not locked?"

"Oh, yes," said Hans, "but they were wire gates, and only a few yards away, at one side, the wire near the ground was

all bent and gaping. I'm quite a small chap, as you can see, so it was easy for me to crawl underneath. By four in the morning I was miles away. It was all quite simple—I just walked out."

As I pushed the packet of cigarettes over to Hans, seated on the other side of my desk in London, I could not help smiling at the thought of the tough little man making his getaway. *He just walked out . . . all quite simple.* This was indeed the oddest escape story I had ever heard, perhaps because it *was* so simple.

Hans, at any rate, knew just where he was going. After calling once more on his grandmother near Dresden, he headed north again—for Berlin. There he found his mother not so much afraid as angry. "You are not to stay here," she said. "I don't want to be turned out of the house and, if they catch you again, we are the ones who will suffer."

Hans spent that night wondering how to resolve his predicament. Next day he called on the farmer friend who had first given him a job, and asked for a loan of money. The farmer gave him only twenty marks, but it was enough to keep him for a day or two, and Hans took to the road.

"Where to, this time?" I asked him.

His answer was typically naïve and straightforward. "Back to Hanover, of course, to try getting myself a set of documents." And again through the Russian Zone, on foot or with helpful truck drivers, Hans returned to the café-headquarters of the gang dealing in identity papers.

They were friendly but firm. At a time when Gestapo men and others on the run were paying up to 2,000 marks (about £50) for a set of documents, not even the most well-disposed forger was likely to part with them to a youth in trouble and out of funds. Nevertheless, the leader of the clique seemed to have taken to him, and suggested: "Why not go back to England, and get your POW papers in the proper manner, then bring them here and collect some cash?"

"But how can I get back to England?" asked Hans. "The docks at Hamburg are tightly controlled."

"Would you go if I gave you a pass into the docks?" asked the man astutely.

"Of course I would," said Hans. "In Germany I can do nothing. I can't keep on running away from the police."

"All right," said the dealer in documents. "You can have your docks pass if you'll promise to bring your papers here as soon as you return to Germany."

This Hans recklessly promised (though he need not have worried, for by the time he was officially repatriated the place had been shut down). Three nights later, with the help of a ship's cook, he was hidden away in the chain locker of a small vessel due to sail up the Elbe and over to Ipswich.

When the ship neared the English coast the cook told Hans: "You must stay out of sight until we're ready to land."

"Oh, but I don't care about that any longer," said Hans. "You see, I've come back to give myself up!"

The cook gazed incredulously, shrugged and said: "All right, if that's the way you want it. . . ."

So Hans landed with the rest of the crew, returned to the POW camp from whose authority he had escaped a little more than one year earlier, reported to the guard and asked to see the commandant.

"I've come back to work," said Hans, with a grin.

He was then interrogated and the whole story emerged. But the official response was brief. "*An impossible tale.*"

It was thus that the bold young Hans Mueller came into my hands at the London Cage. The Berlin equivalent of the most engaging type of Cockney, the small, pert, courageous Hans, who did not give a damn for prisons or powers-that-be, had slipped through the security nets of Britain and Germany.

Once having realised his story was genuine, I returned him to his camp, suggesting ironically that he should be given every opportunity for having a good time. In the end, he was repatriated. He returned to Berlin; presumably he is there to this day. When I had concluded his interrogation in London, he thanked me for having seen the funny side of it all.

Later that day, a colleague enquired: "What did you do with Hans?"

My reply came right from the heart. "Frankly, I congratulated him. In my opinion the boy deserves a medal."

Chapter Nine

SAGAN—THE ESCAPE

WHAT manner of punishment should be meted out to prisoners-of-war attempting to escape from camps where they are held in captivity by the enemy?

This is no flimsy or undetermined question. The answer is laid down precisely in the Geneva Convention of 1929 governing the treatment of war prisoners. When the nations signed that agreement (Germany's delegate being the first, incidentally, to take up the pen) they declared that the maximum penalty for such offences as escapes from POW camps should be thirty days in the "cooler", though the law expressed it in more formal terms.

Every prisoner of war, of whatever nation, is entitled to try his hand at escape, to rejoin his forces. It is no crime. If he succeeds, good luck. If he fails, thirty days. It sounds, and is, a humanely intelligent rule.

But this is the story, the Sagan Story, of how in 1944 the Nazis stamped on the concept of decency in a fashion that was unprecedented—even for them. At the end of March that year came an incredible plan, highly organised from the topmost levels of the Hitler Reich, to punish escapees in a new and abominable way. Not thirty days, but death by murder. Such was the fate of no fewer than fifty Royal Air Force men recaptured following their breakout from Sagan POW camp—the notorious Stalag Luft III—in Upper Silesia, not far from the border of Poland.

Few among the hundreds of military crimes committed under Hitlerism during the Second World War shocked the ordinary soldier, army officer or airman—including, it should be noted, the ordinary Germans—more than this Gestapo outrage against captive men. For myself, there was also a doleful interest in recalling how some of the criminals, eventually

brought to justice, had felt no remorse, no guilt, no conscience; rather were they convinced, even when facing execution, that they had done right in obeying their orders to kill.

Early in 1948 thirteen of these guilty men were hanged in Hamelin Gaol, near Hamburg. Others got terms of imprisonment ranging from life down to ten years or so. A few are doubtless already freed. But some who took a hand in the murders were never found at all, or brought to trial. Those of them who survived the war are living under assumed names, I daresay, in the Germany of today.

* * *

The art of escaping, as is now well known, became almost a religion with the bold boys of the British Forces when captured by the Germans. In POW camps throughout Europe, and especially in Germany itself, hardly a day passed without someone devising a new scheme, brilliant, crazy, interesting, hopeless, as the case may be, for a breakout involving any number of prisoners from one to several hundreds.

Nowhere was the escape fever more intense, or more busily treated, than at the camp called Stalag Luft III near the small Silesian town of Sagan. Stalag Luft III was a large, dusty, forbidding place covering more than half a square mile, enclosed by a double fence of thickly-banked barbed wire. It had four compounds (later five) for prisoners, who included Americans and Russians as well as RAF officers, with hut accommodation for several thousand men.

Around the barbed wire at intervals were ugly control towers built on stilts, from which the guards, equipped with searchlights and machine-guns, had a clear view over each compound. "Goon boxes" was the prisoners' name for these watchtowers. Dark pine woods surrounded the camp, making the external scene almost as stark as the conditions inside. Bread and margarine (and very little of it), minute portions of horsemeat, and occasional potatoes or sauerkraut formed the bulk of the prisoners' diet, apart from their Red Cross parcels.

As early as 1942 the popular escape pastime—tunnelling beneath the huts—was well under way, but as fast as the tunnels were dug the Germans detected them. Sagan was built on

sandy soil, which made the process of tunnelling relatively simple but increased their chances of failure, with sand collapsing on the naked diggers time and time again. Then the Germans began burying microphones in the ground to pick up the noises of tunnelling in progress. In addition, there were the "ferrets", special German guards wearing overalls, and carrying spiked poles for probing the dusty surface of the compound, for ever tramping the whole area on the lookout for any signs of tunnel work or other forms of suspicious activity.

By 1943 Sagan was housing some of the most incorrigible escape planners of the war, along with some of the cleverest amateur experts on the practical side of tunnelling technique. Men like Squadron Leader Roger J. Bushell, a former ski-ing champion, born in South Africa, trained as a lawyer. Men like Peter Fanshawe and Jimmy Buckley, both lieutenants of the Fleet Air Arm, and Squadron Leader Ian Cross; Wing Commander Harry Day, a tall veteran of the First World War; a young flying officer called Dennis Cochran; Flight Lieutenant Michael Casey; and the popular Squadron Leader Tom Kirby-Green.

With them were a host of men from the Commonwealth—South Africans like Clement McGarr, Rupert Stevens, John Travis from Rhodesia; Canadians like Patrick Langford, Wally Floody, Henry Birkland; Australians John Williams and James Catanach, both squadron leaders.

And many Europeans who had been flying with the RAF—Ernst Valenta, the Czech; Kolanowski, Krol and Pawluk, the Poles; Henry Picard, the Belgian; Marcinkus, a Lithuanian; and the Frenchman, Bernard Scheidhauer. All these were among the 1,400 RAF officers who eventually landed in what was called North Compound, the largest at Stalag Luft III.

By April 1943 a master-plan for the most daring mass escape ever known was under secret discussion. It should be remembered that tunnelling was a standard pastime at Sagan. More than eighty tunnels had already been dug—and detected. The German camp authorities were well aware of these furious excavations by the prisoners; in fact, it is reasonable to suggest that they often *allowed* tunnelling to continue until a good deal of progress had been made before the guards pounced.

But no escape project at Sagan was ever more ambitious than the prodigious triple-tunnel scheme which went under the names of "Tom", "Dick" and "Harry". It began one day with a conference at which Squadron Leader Bushell outlined a plan for digging three tunnels, leading from three separate hut blocks, with hundreds of men engaged. Twenty to thirty feet deep, with an underground "railway" in each, electric lighting, and pipelines for air, the tunnels would travel several hundred feet under the compound and out near the pine woods on the far side, the freedom side, of Sagan's barbed wire.

As for the organisation, designed to achieve a breakout by about 200 men, there would be a comprehensive intelligence and security network, secret workshops for producing tools, equipment, clothing, maps—and forged passes.

Massive in concept, the project entitled "Tom", "Dick" and "Harry" was rapidly approved, and work commenced. The senior British officer, Group Captain H. M. Massey, gave the scheme his blessing but warned that the utmost care and security should be maintained. And so, over the next few months, right under the noses of the German guards, the "ferrets" and the men in the "goon boxes", the RAF prisoners created their strange masterpiece of escape machinery. The project soon began to resemble a busy industrial enterprise. Flight Lieutenant Tim Walenn headed a team of men, mostly artists and designers, whose task was to manufacture forged papers and passes. There was a tailoring and dyeing department for converting uniforms and overalls into styles that might safely be worn outside the camp. One team produced compasses, another turned out maps. There were metal workers and carpenters making tools and equipment for the tunnels. There was an intelligence team headed by Tom Kirby-Green and Valenta, the Czech.

There was no limit to ingenuity. Dried-milk tins, the bottoms knocked out, were joined together to make a pipeline for air supplies to the underground operators. The air pump itself, worked by a makeshift bellows, consisted of a pair of kitbags sewn together. Bed boards were ripped from the men's bunks

to make tunnel props. String was plaited into rope for the underground trolley gear.

The trapdoor leading to "Tom" was located in a hut in Block No. 123, the block that lay nearest to the barbed-wire fence and the woods beyond; "Dick's" trapdoor was in the next hut, No. 122; while the "Harry" tunnel was started from Hut 104, facing the road running past the camp gates. So brilliantly designed were the traps that not even the most observant German ferret was likely to spot them.

Sinking a shaft for each tunnel meant calling on every available man with experience of mining or similar underground work in civilian life, though not all the tunnel volunteers were specialists. It was tricky, dangerous work. The shaft for "Tom" went down thirty feet into sandy soil, which cracked and crumbled and fell in great chunks, always liable to bury the sweating labourers below.

Danger apart, there was also the problem of what to do with the sand once excavated. Scores of tons of the yellow stuff had somehow to be disposed of in and around the huts, and in this task too there were strokes of genius. One idea involved an intricate arrangement using the legs of woollen underpants that were filled with sand and *worn under the trousers*. Prisoners casually walked about outside the huts bedecked in these trouser-bags, which were equipped with a string passing up the legs so that sand could be released in small doses around the compound whenever the string was tugged. At other times it was dispersed under the huts, in the huts, even in Red Cross boxes kept under the men's beds.

Not every German camp guard remained conscientious and vigilant; in fact, quite a few were easily corrupted, and with bribes of coffee, cigarettes and bars of chocolate from the Red Cross parcels, the prisoners managed to obtain tools and materials from time to time.

Perhaps the best-liked of the authorities was the Commandant, a tall, correct, reasonable man in his sixties, Colonel von Lindeiner. His task was difficult enough, without the added complications of a population that never lost its mania for escape, and he was respected by every British officer from the senior man downwards.

By the summer of 1943, Squadron Leader Bushell and Co. decided to concentrate work on "Tom". Von Lindeiner had announced that a new compound was being built for the Americans (many of whom were enthusiastically engaged on the tunnelling scheme) and declared that British and American officers would be segregated when the compound was ready. So, at the rate of about ten feet per day, "Tom" was hurried forward. Before long the tunnel was more than a hundred feet in length and was nearly level with the barbed wire of the camp some twenty-five feet above.

Then came a setback. The dispersal of those hundredweights of yellow sand around the huts was detected by the guards, and it soon became clear that the Germans knew something was afoot. Huts were searched. Heavy wagons were driven around the compound in an effort to collapse any tunnel that might lie beneath. Once more the ferrets came shoving their long metal probes into the earth in hopes of finding a tunnel roof. The search, however, was a failure, for these tunnels lay deep enough to escape discovery even by the microphones.

To some extent the sand-dispersal problem was solved by the simple expedient of putting the sand from "Tom" into the "Dick" tunnel, next door, where work had been stopped. Excavation went steadily on, and soon "Tom" was almost doubled in length.

A bitter blow was in the offing, however. Convinced that a major piece of tunnelling was going on *somewhere* under the compound, the Germans launched yet another search, this time picking Block 123 for special attention. Poking around the floor of the hut with a steel spike, a guard stumbled upon "Tom's" cleverly-concealed trapdoor. The game was up.

Even von Lindeiner was impressed with the size of "Tom". This was the ninety-eighth tunnel to be discovered at Stalag Luft III. It was a gloomy day for Roger Bushell and his team of experts and labourers when "Tom" was finally blown up.

This catastrophe brought about a cautious revision of Bushell's great plan. All work on the still-undiscovered "Dick" and "Harry" was stopped; and for the next few months they concentrated on important details concerning the forgery "department".

Autumn came and went, followed by a snowy, miserable winter. It looked as if the escape season was over. Certainly the Germans would suspect no breakout foolishness while snow lay nine inches thick. But with Christmas gone and the cold New Year, 1944, well into its stride, Bushell and his friends set to work in a new drive to press forward with "Harry" so that the tunnel should be completed by the time the bad weather dispersed.

Once more the diggers went below and, by mid-February, "Harry" was burrowing about 250 feet through the earth. Even during these winter months it seemed that the Germans were not entirely fooled. More searches were ordered. Security men from Breslau visited the camp, and there was talk of severe penalties to cope with any further attempts at escape. Von Lindener, the commandant, called a special meeting of senior British officers, warning them of stern consequences if this favourite pastime of the RAF continued.

But "Harry" stayed undiscovered. The weeks passed, and the duty-shifts of diggers worked on, until, by the middle of March, they were able to calculate that the glorious, long-dreamed day had arrived. After nearly a year of hard labour, full of alarms and accidents, the tunnel was more than 350 feet long and already outside the barbed-wire fences surrounding the Sagan compound. Soon they were digging upwards, finding tree roots near the surface. Finally, the triumphant news was announced. They were only inches from the top.

Throughout the compound the atmosphere became a mixture of relief and tension. It must have been a truly remarkable scene when the leaders sat down that day to consider not only their achievement but all that was still to be achieved. Scarcely believing the reality of the finished tunnel, the mere business of completing a mass escape seemed for a moment, by comparison, a small matter. But only for a moment. No one knew better than Roger Bushell that the worst was still to come; and even though the goal was in sight there was always the impending threat of a new spate of searches, and the dreaded prospect that "Harry's" trapdoor in Hut 104 might be found by the guards.

With "Harry" ready, a momentous decision had to be taken

... the careful choice of a day, or rather a night, for the big breakout. In this, two factors were important; first, they needed a marked improvement in the weather; secondly, they must pick a night when there would be little or no moonlight. After much consultation it was agreed that zero hour should be fixed for either March 23 or March 24, Thursday or Friday, the final choice to be left until nearer the day and settled according to weather conditions.

Next came the delicate process of selecting the names of those who would make the bid for freedom. Clearly, the men who had contributed most to the year's work were entitled to a place on "Harry's" list, and it was equally obvious that those who spoke good German should also be included. Eventually, names went into a hat and were drawn. The final list totalled 220 men.

Some were to travel by train. There was even a cash pool for buying tickets when, or if, they reached a railway station. Over the past months several thousand German marks had been collected as a result of the continuous campaign of bribery, selling and exchange that went on between the prisoners and the camp guards and ferrets.

The great majority would be legging it across country as best they could. They knew well enough, of course, that their chances of success were small. That, however, was not the all-important consideration. The argument behind such widespread escape schemes as those persistently organised by RAF prisoners was that their nuisance value alone made a contribution, as it were, to the Allied war effort. With scores of tunnel projects and hundreds of smaller-scale diversions on the go, the Germans were compelled to use extra manpower both inside and outside the POW camps.

The planners of "Tom", "Dick" and "Harry" were bent on developing such an all-out nuisance operation that the whole of Germany would have to be alerted, they hoped, in order to cope with the escaping hundreds. In this they were certainly successful, though none guessed the brutal tragedies that were about to fall.

If, they argued, a few prisoners got away to England, or Norway, or anywhere outside German-occupied territory, so

much the better. But the tunnellers of Stalag Luft III were aware, all the same, that within a few days or a few hours of the breakout, most of their number were likely to be recaptured.

Nothing was left to chance. Passes, compasses, food packs, maps and even railway timetables were available, and those who were travelling on foot got extra rations, though these were meagre enough. False identity papers, manufactured by the score in Walenn's strange art factory, showed that most of the escaping men would be travelling as "foreign workers" of one kind or another—Spaniards, Lithuanians, Swiss; while others were openly "German".

There was still a good deal of snow on the ground by Thursday the 23rd, but the weather was milder than for weeks past, the thaw was starting, and the nights were moonless. A brief conference was called. The tension mounted to wellnigh unbearable heights as the decision was announced. "Tomorrow night," said Bushell. That meant Friday the 24th.

The next few hours were spent getting everything ready inside the tunnel as well as among the chosen men. Blankets were nailed to the underground trolley rails which ran through "Harry" to ensure that no racket was made while the men (lying flat, incidentally, on a small wooden platform) pulled themselves by the rope along the tunnel. At seven o'clock on Friday evening the big operation went smoothly into action. Sentries had been posted all over the place to watch every movement of the German guards. One by one, the escapees made their way by various circuitous routes to a hut near 104. There they were ticked off the list and sent on to 104, where they waited, nervous and full of excitement.

By nine o'clock, a little behind schedule, the first batch were clambering through the trapdoor, down the long shaft and into the 360-foot excavation where they had laboured so devotedly. At last, Sagan's hundredth tunnel—for that was "Harry's" distinction—was playing its part as no tunnel had ever done before. Roger Bushell, Paddy Langford, Valenta the Czech, and the Frenchman Scheidhauer, along with three officers called Marshall, Bull and Stevens, were among the first to go. Nearly twenty men were in position inside the tunnel

before the leaders, Bull and Marshall, climbed up the shaft at the far end of "Harry" to dig their way out into the open.

The idea was that Bull should clamber out first, remaining for a while on the surface signalling the All Clear to the first batch of men. Those who followed him would pause at the top of the shaft, waiting for a tap on the head from Bull before coming out.

The last few inches of sandy soil were scratched away with a shovel, until finally the surface was broken, the tiny hole grew larger, and gazing upwards from the shaft Bull saw the stars in the sky. But not until he had hoisted himself out on to the ground, where he lay flat beside the hole, was the awful truth revealed. By some luckless miscalculation "Harry" was several yards short of the woods and their protection. Worst of all, it had broken out only a few yards from the base of one of the "goon boxes", where the armed sentries manned their searchlight.

Returning down the shaft Bull broke the news to Roger Bushell and the others. It was a terrific shock, but they had either to abandon the breakout or go forward. They agreed to go on.

The first problem was to find some method of bringing each man out of the shaft without keeping Bull exposed on the surface, where he was bound to be spotted sooner or later. This was solved by fetching a longish rope, with which Bull crawled to a spot near the edge of the wood, where he waited. Then a new system was hurriedly devised. A tug on the rope, which was tied to the top of the shaft ladder, was the signal to emerge.

Fortunately, the watchtower Germans were not concerned with what went on in the woods behind them. Their attention and their searchlight beam were focussed in the opposite direction across the compound. On the other hand, there was also a pair of sentries patrolling on foot alongside the barbed-wire fence, and as they tramped up and down Bull realised it would be essential to wait until they were out of sight before signalling any of his comrades.

Eventually the rope was tugged for the first time, and out came Marshall. After a shivery greeting he went into the wood to wait for the next man, Valenta. A few minutes later they



Left: Roll call at Sagan: German camp security officers checking names of British POWs.

Below: Outside one of the huts at Stalag Luft III. Facing camera is Wing Commander Stanford Tuck. (Right) the camp commandant, von Lindener.



VICTIMS OF THE SAGAN



1



2



3



4



5



6



8



10



12



16



21

1. Birkland, H.
2. Brettell, E.G.
3. Bull, L.
4. Bushell, R.J.
5. Casey, M.J.
6. Catanach, J.
7. Christensen, A.G.
8. Cochran, D.H.
9. Cross, K.J.
10. Espelid, H.
11. Evans, B.H.
12. Fuglesang, N.
13. Gouws, J.S.
14. Grisman, W.J.
15. Gunn, A.
16. Hake, A.H.
17. Hall, C.P.
18. Hayter, A.R.H.
19. Humphreys, E.
20. Kidder, G.A.
21. Kierath, R.V.
22. Kiewnarski, A.
23. Kirby-Green, T.G.
24. Kelanowski, A.W.
25. Krol, S.



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14



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MURDER DECREE



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37



41



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26. Langford, P.W.
27. Leigh, T.B.
28. Long, J.L.
29. Mc Garr, C.A.
30. Mc Gill, G.E.
31. Marcinkus, R.
32. Milford, H.J.
33. Mondschein, J.T.
34. Pawluk, K.
35. Picard, H.A.
36. Pohe, F.P.
37. Scheidhauer, B.W.
38. Skentzikes, S.
39. Swain, C.D.
40. Stevens, R.
41. Stewart, R.C.
42. Stower, J.G.
43. Street, D.O.
44. Tobolski, P.
45. Valenta, E.
46. Walenn, G.W.
47. Wernham, J.C.
48. Wiley, G.W.
49. Williams, J.E.
50. Williams, J.F.



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39



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43



44



45



47



48



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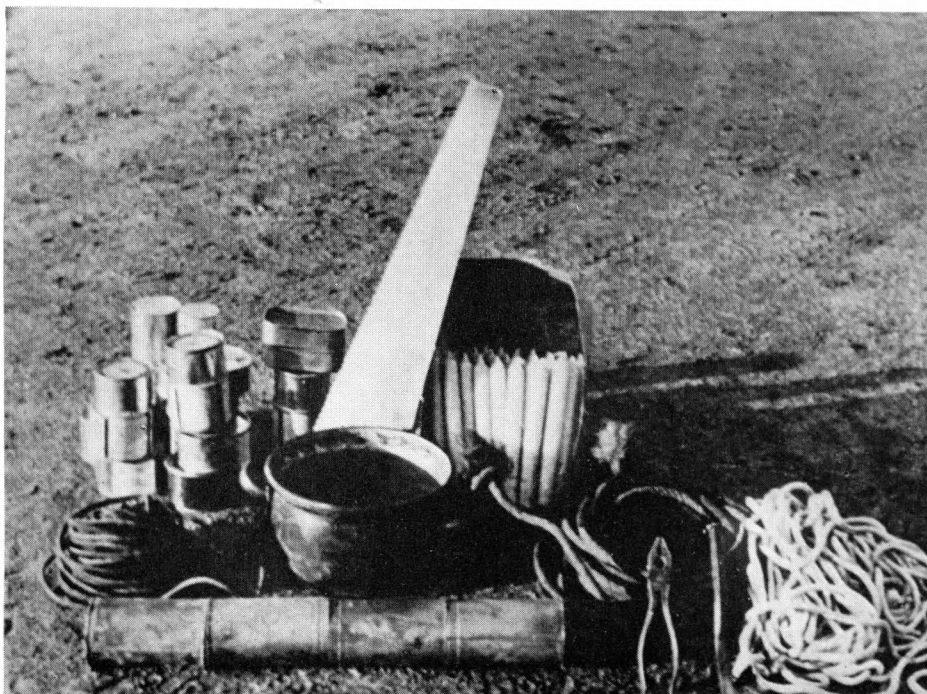


50



Entrance to an escape tunnel in one of the POW huts at the notorious Stalag Luft III.

Below : Instruments and materials for tunnelling. Note the cocoa tins, often used for making an underground air pipeline.



were joined by Bushell. Then came Scheidhauer, who was to be Bushell's travelling companion.

One hour later the leaders were on their way and the crawl through the tunnel continued. By then, however, the timetable was hopelessly wrecked, for whereas it had been planned to get the men through the tunnel at a fairly rapid rate once the first batch had successfully broken through, the unexpected setbacks had now made progress painfully slow. On they went, nevertheless.

Long after midnight a mere forty to fifty were away. Among them, incidentally, were two whose names were Muller and Rockland, and another officer called Van der Stok. No one then thought that these three would be the only men of Sagan to escape from their German gaolers and make the complete getaway as planned.

By four in the morning it was obvious that not even a hundred men, much less double that figure, were likely to pass through "Harry" before daybreak. By five o'clock, eighty had made the trip, and the next half-dozen were slipping into the trapdoor in 104, down the shaft, ready for the long, cramped, prostrate haul on the underground trolley to what they hoped was freedom.

At this point they decided to call a halt. Any minute the first light would be brightening the snowy ground; to continue sending men on that agonising crawl from the tunnel exit into the shelter of the trees would merely be asking for trouble—they were bound to be spotted either by "goon box" guards or the sentries still pacing the wire.

Then it happened. A German sentry, making an unexpected detour instead of keeping to his normal up-and-down patrol, caught a glimpse of the slushy tracks in the snow. Half stupefied when he found the tracks leading to the gaping exit from "Harry", and still more astonished by the sight of a man lying in the snow beside the escape hole, he fired a shot in the air. There was a sudden scurry at the edge of the wood. Two or three had jumped from their hiding places near the trees to make a desperate dash for it.

The German got out his torch, shone it down "Harry's" shaft and found a man clinging to the ladder. It was an officer

called McBride. Then a man got to his feet from the slush, where he had been lying flat on his face for some minutes. This was Squadron Leader Trent, a VC and DFC.

A couple of minutes later the sentry had four of them covered with his rifle: Trent, Reavell Carter, McBride and an officer called Lang who had been operating the rope signal.

Up in the watchtower there was frantic activity on the telephone. A crowd of armed Germans came racing from the camp gate and headed for the wood. The four unhappy captives, having no idea just how lucky they were to be caught at this juncture, were marched off to the guardroom.

Down in the tunnel and back in 104 everything was chaos. Some of them had heard the shot. Realising the game was up, they began hiding or destroying their precious escape gear, while orders were yelled to bring back the men still underground.

Soon it was all over. Von Lindeiner, now a harassed and angry commandant, ordered the prisoners from 104 on parade. The "ferrets" began investigating the tunnel, and troops with machine-guns were brought into the compound. The prisoners' photographs and identification documents were checked. Everyone was searched. Some were consigned to the "cooler" for a spell of solitary. The rest went back to their huts, forlorn, confused and wondering how their comrades were faring on the great trek from Stalag Luft III.

Altogether, seventy-six officers were missing. Seventy-six determined English and Continental RAF men were at large somewhere in Germany. But not for long.

Early that morning—Saturday—there came into the picture a certain Max Wielen, chief of the Kriminalpolizei (the German C.I.D.) for the district of Breslau. Several times over the past few months he had taken a hand in the efforts to suppress escape activity in general, and tunnel schemes in particular. The Sagan camp lay inside his area and, as soon as the scale of the "Harry" escape was known, he ordered the manhunt which went under the name of *Kriegsfahndung*. A few hours later this hue-and-cry was proclaimed as a nationwide *Gross-fahndung*, which meant the highest form of search order covering the entire country. The ordinary police, the security,

railway and frontier police, the army and air force, SS men and Gestapo, Home Guard, Hitler Youth, everyone, was now officially brought into the hunt.

What of the seventy-six men on the run? At Sagan railway station the celebrated "Wings" Day and his travelling companion, Tobolski, entered the second stage of their journey when they bought tickets for Berlin and stepped aboard the train bound for the capital. Stevens and Gouws, both South Africans, were another pair who succeeded in catching a train from Sagan, as did Tom Kirby-Green and his fellow-traveller, Kidder, and a number of others. Valenta and Marshall, also intending to go by train, were caught by an air-raid warning, missed the station and decided to walk, hoping they could reach Czechoslovakia. Flight Lieutenant Bull and three others were heading for another part of the Czech border, while young Cochran was making for Switzerland. Others were heading north towards Kiel. Bushell and Scheidhauer were on the train for Saarbruecken, from which point their goal was France.

Whatever the target and the method of transport, all were doomed to failure and most were doomed to die. Except, that is, for the fortunate trio who miraculously got to England. Jens Muller and Rockland were in Stettin less than forty-eight hours after the break, stowed away on a Swedish boat and were landed in Sweden; from there they flew across to England.

Van der Stok had an altogether more nerve-wracking time of it, eventually reaching his home in Holland (though not daring to visit his family there), hiding out while the Dutch underground resistance movement arranged to help him into Belgium, finally reaching occupied France, striking south and entering Spain across the Pyrenees. He flew from Gibraltar to England—more than ten weeks after his escape.

As for the remaining seventy-three who, within a day or two, were widely scattered, the odds were heavily against them. "Wings" Day and Tobolski were caught at Stettin; Roger Bushell and Scheidhauer were picked up by German security men at Saarbruecken. Several got as far as Danzig and Kiel before being recaptured. Tom Kirby-Green and Gordon Kidder were arrested on the Czech border.

No fewer than nineteen of the escapees were caught in the

vicinity of Sagan itself. The search went on for two weeks. And long before then, incidentally, the well-liked Colonel von Lindeiner, Commandant of Stalag Luft III, was relieved of his post. A Colonel Braune took over.

A few days later Group Captain Massey was told that the new commandant wished to see him. Curtly, and refusing to answer questions or enlarge the news, Braune informed him that forty-one of the seventy-six RAF officers who had escaped on the night of March 24 had been "*shot while resisting arrest or attempting further escape after being arrested*".

Stunned and heartbroken, Massey was unable to speak for quite a few seconds. Then his brain began working again and he asked: "How many were wounded?"

Embarrassed by this question, the new commandant spoke reluctantly. "No one was wounded."

By now Massey's mind was reeling, and he was consumed with anger. After voicing his shocked disbelief that forty-one men could be killed while attempting to escape and not a single one wounded, he asked for the names of the victims. The commandant told him they would be supplied as soon as possible, and there the meeting ended.

Massey then called a conference of all senior officers among the prisoners and released the terrible news. Soon the blow hit everyone in the camp, and even while they held a memorial service for their murdered friends there were many who still could not believe it. Some days later, a list of names of the dead was pinned to a notice-board. On it were not forty-one names, but forty-seven. Later another list went up, bringing the total to fifty.

Meantime, fifteen of the seventy-six who went through the tunnel called "Harry" had been brought back to the camp. For them, as for the rest of the camp, the story was still utterly confused. Why, where and how had fifty of their friends and colleagues been murdered? No one could answer that, but a few weeks later the hard facts of the deaths were borne in upon the prisoners with a grim force. Urns containing the ashes of the fifty victims were delivered to the senior British officer. On each was marked the name of the town where the cremation had taken place.

The men of Stalag Luft III were later permitted to build a vault in the cemetery at Sagan, and there they placed the ashes.

These were the RAF men whose memories they honoured:

A Lithuanian—F/Lt. Romas Marcinkus; a Belgian—F/O Henri Picard; a Czech—F/O Ernst Valenta; a Greek—P/O Sotiros Skantziklas; a Frenchman—Lt. Bernard Scheidhauer; two Norwegians—Lt. Espelid and Lt. Nils Fugelsang; and six Poles—F/Lt. Anthoni Kiewnarski, F/O Kazimierz Pawluk, F/O Włodzimierz Kolanowski, F/O Stanislaw Krol, F/O Pawel Tobolski, F/O Jerzy Mondschein.

There were also the airmen of the Commonwealth. Six Canadians—F/Lt. James Wernham, F/Lt. George Wiley, F/Lt. Patrick Langford, F/Lt. George McGill, F/O Henry Birkland, F/O Gordon Kidder; four Australians—F/O Albert Hake, S/Ldr. John Williams, F/Lt. Reginald Kierath, S/Ldr. James Catanach; two New Zealanders—Arnold Christensen and John Pohe, both flying officers.

There were also three South Africans—Lt. Clement McGarr, Lt. Johannes Gouws and Lt. Rupert Stevens.

And there were twenty-two RAF officers of Britain—S/Ldr. Ian Cross, F/Lt. Michael Casey, F/Lt. Thomas Leigh, F/Lt. Brian Evans, F/Lt. Charles Hall, F/Lt. Edgar Humphreys, F/Lt. Cyril Swain, F/O Robert Stewart, F/Lt. William Grismann, F/Lt. Alistair Gunn, F/Lt. Harold Milford, F/Lt. John Williams, F/O Henry Street, F/Lt. James Long, F/Lt. Lester Bull, F/O John Stower, F/Lt. Edward Brettell, F/Lt. Gilbert Walenn, S/Ldr. Roger Bushell, F/Lt. Anthony Hayter, F/O Dennis Cochran and S/Ldr. Tom Kirby-Green.

* * *

I have given in this chapter no more than a brief outline of the mass escape from Stalag Luft III, of the fantastic scale of operations by the prisoners, of the work and courage that went into those three tunnels, "Tom", "Dick" and "Harry", of the breakout from "Harry" on March 24, 1944... and of the round-up of prisoners which ended in one of the worst crimes on record.

Reconstruction of the facts was a slow and difficult process. Some of the information was brought by the three men whose venture turned out successfully. More came from repatriated RAF prisoners. Other pieces of the jigsaw of this war crime fell into place by way of secret sources and the labours of our intelligence officers. But not till the end of the war was it possible to begin the real investigation. And that was perhaps the largest and most bitter of all the tasks with which, as head of the War Crimes Investigation Unit, I became closely associated.

After forty years spent in study of the German way of life, its social pattern, its military machine and its soldiers of all ranks, the Sagan enquiry brought me face to face with the men who, more than any others in Hitler's Germany, had stained their nation's character—the murder squads of the Gestapo.

Chapter Ten

SAGAN—THE INVESTIGATION

ONE rainy morning in the winter of 1945 I sat in my first-floor room at the London District Cage, looking out on the architectural opulence of Kensington Palace Gardens, and wondering how, or if, we could ever make progress with the investigation into the Sagan murders.

For more than twelve months we had known the bare facts. We knew that the fifty escaping RAF officers of Stalag Luft III POW Camp, near Sagan in Upper Silesia, had been callously shot by the Germans. We knew that their bodies were cremated and the ashes handed over for burial to their prisoner-comrades still at Sagan. We knew that seventy-six men had broken from the camp after worming their way underground through the 360-foot tunnel called "Harry" on the night of March 24, 1944. Three achieved their freedom, but fifty others were murdered.

And that was about all the information we had.

Who and where were the killers? How and when were the murders committed? What hope was there now of tracking down Gestapo Germans who, even if they were still alive, would undoubtedly be living under false identities? To such questions there were no simple answers. In addition, the Sagan area itself now lay across the borders of the new Poland; and like the rest of Europe, east of East Berlin, it was a sealed area.

Feeling little encouragement as I turned such thoughts over in my mind that November day in London, I sent for one of the two high-ranking German officers who had been brought to The Cage from the Continent, where they were captured.

General Grosch, a tall, well-built man in the late forties, had been directly responsible, as a member of Goering's Luftwaffe staff, for the security and welfare of air force prisoners-of-war. Commander of what was termed a "reconstruction unit", he had as his second-in-command a middle-aged, nervous-looking

colonel called Waelde, who was also in our hands at The Cage.

At first Grosch seemed bent on an attitude of obstructive dignity. "I want you to tell me everything you know about the Sagan murders," I began.

Frowning, the General spoke pompously. "I refuse to make any statements. I have no comment whatever on the matter. If you wish to put questions, I will try to answer."

This was no good, and I decided to adopt more positive, if not especially truthful measures. "Do you realise, General, that this is an extremely serious business *for you personally*?" I lied.

He blinked, and a hint of alarm crossed his face.

"All I have to do," I went on, "is prove to a court of law that *you* are the officer responsible for the well-being of those fifty RAF officers, and then . . ."

I shrugged and looked up at the ceiling as if to convey that the noose was already around his neck, though I guessed the poor man was almost certainly innocent of any connection with the crime.

"I have no questions," I said. "Just write down your version of the story. It is for you to convince me that no guilt lies at your door."

This tactic seemed to produce results, for General Grosch sighed, and said: "Give me a pencil and paper, I'll do what I can."

"Go back to your room," I told him, "and write down precisely what you did from day to day during the days before and after the escape, whom you saw, what meetings you attended, who gave you advice, or orders, and so on. Think it out carefully, and take your time."

There were occasions, I confess, when I felt and doubtless behaved like a bad schoolmaster nagging some innocent fifth-former till the luckless youth becomes unsure what will be in store for him if he doesn't own up to *something*. But I was much in the dark at this stage, and very conscious that the Sagan affair was no schoolboy misdemeanour but a series of coldly-planned murders of brave men. So, if a little nagging could help the case along by the smallest degree, it was all in a good cause.

Next, I called for Colonel Waelde, an ex-bank clerk, a family

man, nondescript and with little confidence, who wilted the moment I suggested he might be concerned in, or have knowledge of, the events leading to the Sagan crime.

"Believe me, I know nothing at all," he protested.

This was too much for me, and I scowled. Faced with yet another reluctant German it seemed that another judicious lie was due.

"Let me first tell you, Colonel, that *I* know you know *all* about it. What is more, you know more than your general knows."

Waelde looked startled. "How can you say that?"

"Because he told me so," I lied again. "You see, Colonel, I've had a very long talk with the General, who gave me some interesting facts about all sorts of things—including you."

At this, Waelde went pink. I almost laughed aloud when he then asked: "All right, what do you want me to say?"

"No, no, that is not the way we do things here," I told him. "I want you to write your story on paper. Go back to your room . . . think it out carefully, then . . ." And I gave him the same rigmarole as for General Grosch. Off he went, while I sat back to consider the position.

With both men now scribbling for dear life in separate rooms, permitted no contact with each other or anyone else except the guard who brought their food, there were hopes that we might soon get to the root of at least one aspect of the plan for the Sagan outrage.

We were not altogether disappointed. The General and his colonel freely described their activities at the time of the murders, and before long we had valuable leads—pointing to (among other places) no less a spot than Berchtesgaden, the Fuehrer's headquarters.

General Grosch's tale was a short one. He had been ill, it seemed, at the time of the Sagan breakout, and only rushed back to his office in Berlin on being informed by his staff that the alarm was well and truly sounded. But from the bank clerk turned colonel came a more precious picture of events. As second-in-command of the department called Luftwaffen Inspektion 17, Waelde had hurried to Sagan on the very day (Saturday) of the escape, interviewed the camp commandant,

von Lindeiner, and obtained as much of the story as was then known in order to make his report to higher authorities.

Returning to Berlin the colonel was ordered to attend, on the Monday morning, a meeting called by the Director of the High Command department dealing with POW affairs. General Nebe, head of the Kriminalpolizei (Kripo), was present. So was General Mueller, Gestapo chief. At this meeting, according to Waelde, a shattering disclosure was made. On the previous day, Sunday, an angry conference had been held at Berchtesgaden, where Hitler, Himmler, Goering and Keitel discussed the mass escape. And there the Sagan shooting order was agreed.

Waelde was even more shaken when General Mueller told him at Monday's meeting that fifteen of the recaptured RAF men had already been shot (a point which we later discovered to be untrue at the time).

As for the Sagan commandant, von Lindeiner had been quickly removed from his post, and was later court-martialled.

The great manhunt following the escape, declared Waelde, was entirely in the hands of the Security Service, which came under Himmler. Waelde and General Grosch were eventually packed off to a camp where we were holding Germans required for the Nuremberg trial of Hermann Goering. They had given us little enough to go on, but we had also interrogated the dignified von Lindeiner and other Germans, who continually spoke of the Gestapo as being responsible for the shootings, suggesting the names of officers who, they said, "must know all the details of the crime". And so, bit by bit, the direction of our enquiries became clearer.

Meantime, a postwar manhunt was also proceeding in Germany. Headed by a former Scotland Yard man, Wing Commander Bowes of the RAF Investigation Branch, teams of interrogators were questioning tens of thousands of Germans held in the POW camps at the end of the war.

There were two sides to the problem. First and foremost, we were after the murderers themselves—the local Gestapo officers of all the districts where the shootings occurred. Secondly, we wanted the "head office boys" from Berlin, the executives and

administrators who alone could tell us the sequence of events as shaped from the top by Hitler, Himmler and the rest.

Months dragged by, showing little result. But then, with a little luck and unbelievable patience on the part of Bowes and his teams, the tide began to turn; and towards the spring of 1946 we were receiving at the London Cage a batch of Germans whose evidence was to prove invaluable. Among them were Gestapo officers from the very fountainhead of Himmler's criminal planning—the Berlin headquarters of the Gestapo at Alexanderplatz.

A markedly subtle lot they were, these Kripo and Gestapo servants, when we set about the job of interrogation. A thousand-and-one times before we got to the bottom of the Sagan story I was to hear the expression *Es war eine geheime Reichsache* . . . "It was a State secret". To one of my own unit officers I said: "The trouble is we can't be certain whether this *Geheime Reichsache* gambit is designed to hide what they know, or whether it's just a case of their not knowing anything worth knowing."

The interrogations proceeded. We were holding eight or nine men from Alexanderplatz, and all except one wore the black SS uniform to which they were entitled as Gestapo officers. This was my first postwar contact with the Gestapo HQ character, and it soon became plain that I was dealing with a collection of pompous, arrogant Prussians who had been little more than office stooges at Alexanderplatz.

The odd man out, however, was a short, amiable Bavarian called Peter Mohr, a civilian prisoner who held the rank of *Kriminalkommissar* in the Berlin Kripo under General Nebe. His job appeared to include a good deal of liaison work with Gestapo officials, and I pricked up my ears at his reference to certain reports which had figured in the files on the Sagan escape. These files were his responsibility during the vital period. Luckily for our progress, Peter Mohr was no Nazi-minded SS man bound by the Hitler loyalty oath—rather, an underpaid civil servant, shocked by the outrages his police duties had revealed.

One week after the Sagan escape, Mohr was ordered to travel to Breslau (Stalag Luft III lay in the Breslau Kriminalpolizei

district) to clear up certain doubtful points in the local Kripo report dealing with the Sagan happenings. At Breslau he met Max Wielen, head of the Kripo there, and together the pair sorted out discrepancies concerning the exact number of recaptured escapees, their correct names and similar data. At one point in his discussions with Wielen, Mohr got quite a shock. Wielen rose from his desk, walked across the room and opened a cupboard. Stacked on the shelves were some twelve to fifteen caskets. They contained the ashes of Stalag Luft III officers shot following their escape and recapture during the previous week. The urns had been delivered from the Breslau branch of the Gestapo. Wielen asked Mohr to report this fact to Berlin.

Only after his return from Breslau to the capital did Mohr learn for the first time the full story of the Sagan shooting order and, as he expressed it, all its "ramifications and consequences". With one or two colleagues he discussed what he called "the terrible import" of this Himmler decree, and was told that General Nebe, head of the Kripo, had himself jibbed at the idea of handing over the recaptured men to the Gestapo.

Several weeks later, Mohr was given the job of filing the top-secret records of the Sagan escape. Among these documents were a number of orders issued by Reichsfuehrer Himmler. They included the notorious Sagan decree, the text of which Mohr was able to reconstruct as follows:

"The increase of escapes by officer POWs is a menace to internal security. I am disappointed (or indignant) about the inefficient security measures. As a deterrent the Fuehrer has ordered that more than half of the escaped officers are to be shot. Thereafter I order that Dept. V (Kripo) hand over for interrogation to Dept. IV (Gestapo) more than half of the recaptured officers. After interrogation the officers are to be returned to their original camp and to be shot en route. The shootings will be explained by the fact that the recaptured officers were shot whilst trying to escape, or because they offered resistance, so that nothing can be proved later. Gestapo will report the shooting to the Kriminalpolizei, giving this reason. In the event of future escapes, my decision will be awaited as to whether the same procedure is to be

adopted. Prominent personalities will be excepted, their names will be reported to me and my decision awaited."

The order was addressed to Kaltenbrunner, who was chief of the security service under the control of Himmler.

Also in the files were two separate sets of teleprinted reports from the Gestapo branches at Breslau, Danzig, Saarbruecken, Munich and elsewhere. Breslau reports were signed by a Gestapo man called Scharpwinkel, and those from Munich by one called Schaefer.

One set of documents were top-secret statements giving brief details of the shootings. Behind the second set, however, lay a devilish piece of planning. For these were ordinary teleprints bearing no "State secret" mark, emanating from the same Gestapo branches as before and blandly telling an official story of how prisoners were shot while attempting to escape.

Dutiful Gestapo guards, according to these non-secret reports, were reluctantly compelled to use their guns after one lot of recaptured RAF men had tried to make a break for it, when not all the shouted warnings of the Gestapo men brought them to a halt. In another case, RAF prisoners appeared to have made a dastardly assault on the guards. In all cases, the shootings occurred at a time when the prisoners were attempting fresh escapes while being transported by car, and usually after being allowed out of the cars in order to relieve themselves by the roadside. Indeed, no blame could possibly be attached to the Gestapo, judging by the events related in these "non-secret" documents.

But why were these new, more detailed reports placed in the non-secret category? Because Himmler had cunningly anticipated the possibility of a stormy investigation by the International Red Cross. Winston Churchill in London had already spoken of the massacre in the House of Commons; the crime was being reported to the Protecting Power, Switzerland; so *if* the Nazis at some future date found it impossible to wriggle out of a Red Cross probe, it was clearly desirable to have on display, for all the world to inspect, a set of innocent-looking "routine" reports sent through the normal channels—with no incriminating suggestions that the RAF shootings were a matter for State secrecy.

Mohr was also concerned with the murdered officers' personal effects—photographs, watches, loose money, letters, false passes and so on. While carrying out this chore he observed one item of macabre accountancy procedure which is worth noting. Munich Gestapo deducted the cost of coffins and cremation from the money found in the pockets of their two victims, the South African officers, Gouws and Stevens. . . .

In the course of our enquiries we became familiar with a good many sidelights on the characters, foibles, habits and quirks of the leading Nazi personalities. The oddest example emerging from the Sagan case was perhaps the revelation concerning a special typewriter that was used to compose all letters, documents and memoranda destined to be perused by the precious eyes of Adolf Hitler. This typewriter was known as the machine with "Fuehrer type". It was equipped with extra large letters. One day, Mohr stood by while the typist was at work on some fair copies of correspondence which had passed between Himmler and Ribbentrop. The copies were to be sent to Hitler. Much intrigued, Mohr asked the typist why the Fuehrer should require lettering of such a size.

She replied that nowadays Hitler's eyesight was "not so good as it used to be" but at the same time he had no wish to wear glasses . . . hence the giant typeface. She added a solemn warning that Mohr should be careful to make no use of this momentous information, for the existence of the Fuehrer's typewriter was an official State secret!

By the time we had obtained the important statements of people like Mohr and Waelde, together with those of General Grosch, von Lindeiner and several others, we were able to appreciate the significance of four major steps which paved the way for a final rejection of international decency concerning the treatment of war prisoners in Germany. The first was known as the "Igel" order. This was a High Command decree from Keitel that war prisoners should be chained while being moved from one place to another. It stemmed from the deterioration of Germany's military and internal position as far back as the summer of 1943. Casualties were then mounting, the armies were weakened, the country was swarming not only with prisoners-of-war but slave labourers from Russia and elsewhere.

Escapes from the POW and labour camps were a daily occurrence.

As chief of the German security services, Himmler was finding his work increasingly aggravated, a situation which determined him to gain complete control of security matters affecting war prisoners as well as the rest of the nation. Before long his department was nosing its way into the realm of security control at POW camps, and by the beginning of 1944 they were well on the road towards the policy of more ruthless treatment for troublesome prisoners in general and RAF escapees in particular.

A few months after the chaining order, Keitel issued another High Command decree called *Stufe Roemisch III*. This declared that all escaping officers except British and American were to be handed over to the security services, i.e. the Gestapo, on recapture, while British and American prisoners were to be detained for individual consideration. Under this secret *Stufe* order, escapees were not to be officially reported as having been recaptured.

Two weeks later came the *Kugel* (or "Bullet") Order, taking the *Stufe* decision a step further. But this time it was a Gestapo affair, for the *Kugel* operation was announced by the head of the Gestapo in Berlin, General Mueller. And it provided that recaptured officers other than British or Americans should be taken directly to Mauthausen Concentration Camp, there to be killed.

It was a diabolical progression. For when the seventy-six men of Stalag Luft III made their sensational breakout, their number included eighteen officers of Continental origin. These were obvious candidates for murder under the terms of operation "Bullet". And it was, of course, a mere formality to extend the *Kugel* decree to provide for the disposal of British escapees as well.

Thus it came about that Himmler's second-in-command, General Kaltenbrunner, issued the instructions which became known as the Sagan Order—that go-ahead signal for the murders, following the conference between Hitler and his chiefs on the morning after the escape from Stalag Luft III.

Out of our postwar interrogations came an interesting picture

of that Sunday scene at Berchtesgaden. No one will ever know the precise course of the acrimonious conversation among the Nazi leaders, but the evidence from several of our German informants gave us a pretty fair version of the truth.

Goering, Himmler and Keitel were called to a conference by the Fuehrer as soon as he received the news of the RAF mass escape. Tense, angry and excited, Hitler listened while Himmler and Keitel blamed each other, Goering blamed Keitel and Keitel responded by blaming both. The Fuehrer then called a halt to the bickering with a sour-faced declaration. "All the prisoners are to be shot on recapture!" he screamed.

But at this the podgy Hermann Goering made a strong protest, though not for any reasons of humanitarianism.

"If we shoot them all, it will look like murder, besides which I shall never be able to send my fliers over England again for fear of reprisals. If you must kill some, then shoot half."

The Fuehrer, who was becoming more short-tempered every minute, then made a characteristic pronouncement bringing the meeting to an end.

"Stop this argument," he said. "My decision is that more than half of these men are to be shot." To this the others assented, and Hitler left the room.

After the meeting Himmler and his two colleagues further discussed the decision to shoot the prisoners. It was Himmler who finally suggested the exact number of men to be disposed of. "We will make it fifty." Before the day was out, the Sagan murder decree was being transmitted to Kaltenbrunner, who passed it on to the Berlin Gestapo chief, General Mueller, and to General Nebe.

The final decisive act from Berlin headquarters was the selection of the names of RAF officers to be killed. This sordid task fell to Police General Nebe. To do him justice it should be noted that his behaviour was described by a witness as "excited and uncontrolled" because he seemed to be aware of the "monstrosity of the deed he was about to carry out".

The general told one of his officers, Hans Merten, to make a list of the recaptured men and bring him (Nebe) their record cards. Merten went to the office where the prisoners' personal documents were filed, extracted the records and placed them

before his chief. Standing at his desk, Nebe thumbed through the cards, commenting on the names. "See whether they have wives and children," he told Merten, referring to one group. Then, of another man, Nebe said: "He is for it." And of another: "No, not him—he is so young."

And in this fashion, according to Merten, who was among the men questioned at London Cage, the death list was compiled. It was then passed on to the Gestapo's General Mueller.

Events were now moving quickly. Sixty-three-year-old Max Wielen, head of the Breslau Kriminalpolizei, was ordered to Berlin, where he was told of the shooting decree by his unhappy headquarters boss, General Nebe. "The Gestapo will get their orders from General Mueller for the shooting of more than half the officers," said Nebe.

Shortly afterwards, Mueller himself went into action, with a directive to the head of the Gestapo in Breslau, William Scharpwinkel, a fair-haired, ambitious, ruthless individual whom few men dared to oppose. No two Germans hated each other more than the elderly Wielen and the tough, fortyish Scharpwinkel, as we soon discovered when statements were procured from both.

As things turned out, most of the RAF escapees recaptured within twenty-four hours of the break were those held in the Breslau area. Nineteen officers were taken to Goerlitz Prison, several score miles away, where they were joined a few days later by a further sixteen.

It was at this point that Scharpwinkel and his murder gang, headed by a Breslau Gestapo thug called Lux (the man Scharpwinkel had appointed as murderer-in-chief), began their job of organising the first of the killings.

Six days after the escape, Scharpwinkel went to Goerlitz accompanied by Lux, an officer called Erwin Wiczorek and several others. There, Scharpwinkel (who spoke English) interrogated the RAF men, after which six prisoners were bundled into three cars and a small truck with their guards, and the party drove off towards Breslau. This was on Thursday, March 30.

The victims sent on that ride to death were three British air-men, Squadron Leader Ian Cross, Flight Lieutenant Michael

Casey and Flight Lieutenant Tom Leigh; a Canadian, Flight Lieutenant George Wiley; an Australian, Flying Officer Albert Hake; and a New Zealander, Flying Officer John Pohe. An added refinement to the operation was that all six had been told that they were soon to die.

About 3.30 in the afternoon the convoy stopped at a point on the deserted autobahn not far from a wood. The prisoners were then made to get out of the cars and Scharpwinkel told the guards to move them into the wood.

Behind the screen of trees they were lined up and shot. Lux gave the order to fire, also firing his own gun. It was never proved that Scharpwinkel actually used the pistol he carried, but whether he fired or not there was no doubt of one thing: he was the prime mover in these and other executions that took place during the days that followed.

The bodies of these first six were taken to Goerlitz for cremation. A week or two later the urns containing their ashes were sent to Max Wielen at his Breslau headquarters. Over the next fortnight, urns from all over Germany wherever the crimes took place were also despatched to Wielen, who placed them on curtained-off shelves in his own office.

Over that same fortnight, in and around Breslau, the murder squad led by *Kriminal Obersekretaer* Lux carried out a further twenty-one killings, making a total of twenty-seven in the area for which Scharpwinkel was responsible. After each set of murders, Lux would report to Scharpwinkel, who in turn sent off a top-secret telegram confirming the news for the benefit of Gestapo headquarters at Berlin.

Flying Officer Valenta, the Czech, Henry Birkland, Patrick Langford and seven others were killed and their bodies cremated at Liegnitz. Six more were cremated at Breslau after their deaths on April 6. A week later, Flight Lieutenant James Long was taken alone from Goerlitz Prison, shot and also cremated at Breslau. Another batch of four recaptured RAF men were murdered at Hirschberg, a few miles further south.

Hitler and his chief henchmen had said that more than half of the men of Sagan should die, and the Scharpwinkel-Lux squad accounted for more than half of the fifty who were slaughtered.

By the summer of 1946, when our interrogations were proceeding in London and Wing Commander Bowes' great search was going ahead in Europe, we knew that at least a dozen Gestapo men from Breslau were implicated in the crimes. By then, however, there was no hope of bringing them all to justice. Lux was killed in the end-of-war fighting somewhere near the scene of his own shameful deeds. And of most of his guilty assistants there was no trace. As for Scharpwinkel, he was taken prisoner by the Russians, and although we succeeded in obtaining his written version of the story, he was never to be handed over.

But in London we did hold Wielen and Richard Haensel, the Goerlitz Kripo boss in whose office Scharpwinkel had interrogated RAF prisoners before the murders. Later, we also held Erwin Wiczorek, one of Scharpwinkel's deputies, and three Gestapo drivers. From the information supplied by these and others we were able to reach most of the facts.

It was no easy task. One of my unit officers at London Cage, Captain M. F. Cornish, had to fly to Moscow to interrogate that key figure of the Gestapo who was not brought to trial—Wilhelm Scharpwinkel. The Russians, incidentally, declared some time later that Scharpwinkel died following an illness; but those of us who had worked on the Sagan case were disposed to doubt it. Even to this day I am inclined to put the question: Is Scharpwinkel still alive?

At all events we got his statement in 1946 when he was seen to be very much alive. He was also much concerned to convince us that the real blame lay squarely on the shoulders of two men, of whom he was naturally not one. Lux gave the orders to fire, and Lux fired with the rest, said Scharpwinkel. As for Max Wielen, he had been positively aggrieved (said Scharpwinkel) that the shootings were placed in Gestapo hands instead of his own; indeed, as head of the local Kripo, having carried out the policeman's side of the Sagan affair, Wielen was firmly of the opinion (said Scharpwinkel) that he was entitled to finish the job.

Scharpwinkel's cleverly-composed statements, written in Moscow during August and September 1946, concluded with the curious hope that "whoever is judging the matter will take

into account the conditions in Germany at the time, and the fact that soldiers who had taken the oath had to obey every order, for non-compliance would result in court martial”.

Then to the tall, grey, wily Max. Max the Fox, I sometimes called him. He knew as much as any of us about the techniques and stroke-play of interrogation, and despite the fact that we had several surprising cards up our sleeves he persistently refused to implicate himself, though in the end he was brought to trial.

At The Cage in London I told the ex-Breslau Kripo chief that I thought it probable he would be charged with being concerned in the Sagan murders. He bristled. “A charge? But I have committed no crime.”

“That remains to be seen,” I said. “Don’t forget you were the man to whom were delivered the urns containing the ashes of all those murdered men.”

“I couldn’t control that,” said Wielen. “That was all arranged in Berlin.”

“But you’ve not yet told anyone the story,” I went on. “So let us have your version—in writing. And what’s more, it had better be the truth.”

At this last comment he gave me a quizzing glance. “You see, Max,” I continued, “we are already in possession of a lengthy signed statement from your friend Scharpwinkel.”

“I don’t believe it,” he snapped, unable to hide a momentary look of surprise. Anyway, he agreed to put pen to paper and off he went to write his piece.

When the statement was ready, I phoned two of my officers. “Come to my room,” I said, “and listen to Wielen. I’m going to have him in and show him the Scharpwinkel story. But I want a couple of witnesses in case he reacts with something that comes out in court.”

It was just a “hunch” that I ought not to be alone when Wielen perused the Scharpwinkel statement. Certainly I had no serious feeling that the interview could be twisted against me in a Hamburg courtroom some twelve months later.

When Wielen entered my office I was standing with two assistants at one side of the six-by-four table that served as a

desk. Max crossed the threshold and stood facing us, separated by the table.

"Wielen, I want you to read something," I said, tossing him the Moscow document bearing Scharpwinkel's signature.

He picked it up, and began reading. We watched his changing expressions with interest, as he grew hotter and redder and angrier. Suddenly he shouted: "It's a damn swindle. It's lies, all of it. You have fabricated this in order to put me in an awkward position."

"Look at the signature, Wielen," I urged. "See for yourself. That story has been written and signed by Scharpwinkel."

"I don't believe you," he answered. "The whole thing is a swindle."

My plan had obviously failed. I had hoped that Wielen might come across with some admission about his own activities at Breslau, or at least something that would help the case along, but he was not to be drawn.

Before bringing the interview to a close I offered a somewhat irrelevant parting shot. "If you were not the old man that you are, Wielen, and if I were not the old man that *I* am..." (feeling thoroughly frustrated I gave hardly a thought to what I was saying) "...well, I'd give you a punch on the nose for suggesting I'm swindling you," I concluded rather lamely.

And that was that. Wielen (he was then sixty-four years old) was taken away. I (also sixty-four) dismissed the matter from my mind.

But I was underrating the foxy Max. In 1947, when he was accused at Hamburg of taking part in the conspiracy to murder the fifty men of Stalag Luft III, Wielen produced the proverbial "sensation in court". He described the scene in my office as if I had been some Gestapo brute inflicting punishment on a defenceless captive. I had stood over him with clenched fists, said Wielen, ready to beat him up, and threatening heaven knows what in the way of physical damage to his innocent person. It was an ironic twist, and but the first of several attempts on the part of accused Nazis to wriggle from the net by discrediting my tactics during the interrogations in London.

Although Wielen's written statement at The Cage did not carry us much further, it confirmed my view that it was not he

but Scharpwinkel who had been the real executive of the order to shoot the RAF men recaptured around the Breslau district. It may well have been true that he left the shooting, or most of it, to the squad directed by his Gestapo underling, Lux, but Scharpwinkel's reputation for ruthlessness was such that one could hardly accept his bland claim to have been merely an "observer" at the first of the shootings.

So much for the criminals of Breslau. But what of the rest, the killers of more than twenty other RAF escapees who reached towns as far afield as Danzig and the Danish border in the north, Saarbruecken and Karlsruhe in the west? What was the fate of the daring Roger Bushell, and Scheidhauer, his French companion? Of Tom Kirby-Green and Gordon Kidder? And of all those hopeful tunnellers for whom there was no hope at all once the Gestapo went into action?

Pretending to be French workers with jobs in Germany, Bushell and Scheidhauer succeeded in travelling hundreds of miles by train till they eventually reached Saarbruecken, from where they planned to head south into France. But on the platform at Saarbruecken station they were stopped by German policemen and told to produce their passes and papers. Since both men spoke French and German even this ordeal of questioning was not too difficult; indeed, they had almost got away with it when one of the policemen trapped them into speaking a few words of English and the game was up. Roger and his friend were arrested, carted off to the local gaol, interrogated by Kripo officers and identified as RAF escapees from Stalag Luft III.

In the small hours of the morning of March 29 a certain Dr. Spann, head of the local Gestapo, went into action in the manner that was now becoming standard practice for dealing with the recaptured men of Sagan. Berlin had already been informed, and the top-secret Gestapo shooting order had come over the teleprinter to Spann's office. Acting under Spann's orders, *Kriminalsekretaer* Emil Schultz and an ex-regular policeman turned Gestapo driver, Walter Breithaupt, collected the two prisoners from Lerchesflur Prison, brought them back to the Gestapo office and reported to Spann for further orders.

A few hours later Bushell and Scheidhauer, both handcuffed,

were being driven along the autobahn towards Mannheim, believing they were being returned to camp. Between them on the rear seat sat Schultz. The driver was Breithaupt; next to him sat Dr. Spann. After a while the car was stopped. Spann and Schultz climbed out, walked a few yards, paused to light cigarettes. Then they returned to the car, telling Bushell and Scheidhauer that they could get out to relieve themselves. The handcuffs were removed and the two prisoners stood by the roadside. Spann and Schultz shot them from behind.

This was the story I obtained from Schultz and the driver Breithaupt when they were brought to London Cage in the summer of 1946. Spann was already dead, killed in an air raid. Breithaupt had been a most willing and co-operative witness; clearly he was implicated in the crime but I did not imagine that he would go to the gallows with the rabbit Schultz. I was completely surprised when he was sentenced to death at Hamburg.

While at The Cage we were getting on with the job of interrogation, slowly piecing together the awful history. Wing Commander Bowes and his team, aided by an expert from my unit in London, were pursuing the rest of the Gestapo criminals under great difficulties and often with much brilliance. More than 200,000 people altogether were questioned before the search finally ended.

They tracked down, among others, a Gestapo trio from Munich—Emil Weil, Eduard Geith and Johann Schneider. These three, plus a *Kriminalkommissar* called Schermer, drove off in a six-seater car with the two RAF South Africans, Gouws and Stevens.

Once again, the now familiar drive to death along the autobahn. This time the shootings were not merely by pistol; there was also a Russian machine-gun, the property of the driver, Schneider, who had fought on the eastern front. Gouws and Stevens were cremated at Munich. We learned later that Weil had gone to the local crematorium to erase their names from the register.

From one of the murderers, Geith, I received the following story, calmly told. After the shootings he had been given a watch and other items belonging to the two South Africans, and

told to hand them over to the local Gestapo chief, Schaefer. Sorting over the things on his desk, Schaefer picked up an open packet of cigarettes, tossed them across to Geith and said: "No need to give these in . . . may as well smoke them."

So Geith shared the cigarettes with his comrades, Weil and Schneider, adding the curious point when I questioned him in London: "I shared them equally . . ."

Breslau, Saarbruecken, Munich. But these were not all, nor necessarily the most despicable, of the Gestapo crimes. Consider, for example, the Karlsruhe case, where the leading figure was a highly-trained man of good education, a lawyer named Josef Gmeiner.

An ambitious individual intent on reaching higher places in the service of Hitler, the forty-one-year-old Gmeiner was in 1944 the head of Karlsruhe Gestapo. His chief lieutenant was a weak personality, Walter Herburg, who told me in London that he had joined the Nazi Party and the SS some twelve years earlier "out of idealism and enthusiasm".

Together with a commonplace Gestapo trigger-man, Otto Preiss, and their principal driver, Heinrich Boschert, they were responsible for murdering the slim, popular young flying officer, Dennis Cochran. It was the usual tale. The car ride, the halt on a deserted road, the shooting, the cremation, the false report. We also learned that Cochran had been subjected to a cruel interrogation lasting all night, though why this was done or what transpired we were never able to discover.

The Gestapo chief especially interested me. When I first saw his name on paper I thought of that other German word, *gemeiner*, signifying "mean" or "cunning". And after making his acquaintance at London Cage I realised how aptly named was this Josef Gmeiner who stood before me. In conversation, he made no bones about his willingness to execute the shooting order he received by teleprinter from Gestapo headquarters in Berlin.

"As an experienced and knowledgeable lawyer," I told him, "you knew that every action taken from the time Cochran was brought to your office was illegal—illegal under the terms of the Geneva Convention, illegal in German law, illegal and criminal in every sense."

Gmeiner glared at me. "I am a German," he said, "and I did not dream of questioning an order from the Fuehrer merely because I happened to be a lawyer." Having let fall this blatant admission, he then chose the path of subtlety in presenting his version of events.

Arguing, for example, that the teleprinted order from Berlin was in the nature of a "special assignment", which in no way implied that the head of the local Gestapo was personally responsible, he declared that the order came under the competence of his assistant Walter Herburg, who in turn selected Preiss and Boschert for the task of carrying it out.

"I issued no order," said Gmeiner, "but merely repeated what each individual already knew to be his allotted task, to which he had long agreed." For good measure, he added that there was nothing left for him but "to abstain from taking part in the actual execution of the deed..." which caused him "great spiritual distress".

His plea ended on a superb note of distorted self-pity. "If I now have nothing before me after years of hard work, after the complete loss of the modest fruits of my work, when my family is forced to live on the mercy of relatives, there is only the thought that I have not to reproach myself for any guilt."

Consider also the tragic case of four RAF men of Sagan who were murdered by four Gestapo men of Kiel. The victims were the Australian, Squadron Leader Jimmy Catanach, Flying Officer Arnold Christenson, a New Zealander, and two Norwegian airmen, Nils Fugelsang and Hallada Espelid. It had been a long and almost successful journey for the four escapees, who had reached the Danish border town of Flensburg before being recaptured.

Leading the murder squad was an ill-mannered, arrogant, unrepentant Nazi of the kind beloved by Hitler and Himmler, a Major Johannes Post. We traced him towards the end of 1946 with the aid of the wife he had deserted.

Discovering the rest of the gang's whereabouts was no easy assignment for Wing Commander Bowes and his hunters. But knowing the general pattern of the cremations, a search was made in the register at Kiel Crematorium, and there it was

shown that four bodies were cremated on March 29, 1944. The four men concerned had come from Flensburg, further north, and here the investigators dug out former members of the local Gestapo who revealed that the airmen were picked up from the gaol by a Gestapo team from Kiel.

Eventually we tracked down not only the ringleader, Post, but three key men of Kiel Gestapo—Hans Kaehler, Oscar Schmidt and Walter Jacobs, together with two drivers named Wilhelm Struve and Artur Denkmann. The Gestapo chief himself, also called Schmidt, was never traced.

Of all the criminals concerned in the Sagan tragedy, Post was probably the most fiendish. A perfect Nazi, the proud possessor of Hitler's "Order of the Blood" (awarded to those who took part in the Munich *putsch* of 1923), he was hated by his own men, known to be a sadist, and reputed to have been personally responsible for the murder of hundreds of men and women. Not far from Kiel he had directed the building of a slave labour camp; and when, after the war, one of its buildings was demolished, more than 150 bodies—all victims of Johannes Post—were discovered.

The hour-by-hour course of the crime at Kiel was much the same as elsewhere, but among the revelations of our postwar enquiry were several outstanding pointers to the callousness of Post.

Two cars were used to transport the prisoners from Flensburg through Kiel to the chosen site for the shootings. Post and two of his men went ahead in the first car, carrying the Australian, Jimmy Catanach. During the drive, they passed over Kiel Canal Bridge. Here Post ordered the car to stop. Chatting amiably with the doomed Catanach, he spent several minutes pointing out interesting views of the impressive scenery. When he was through, Post told the Australian: "Now I am going to shoot you." Catanach, according to one of our Gestapo informants (Kaehler), laughingly disbelieved this threat, saying: "That nonsense; you can't shoot me—I've done nothing wrong."

Resuming the drive, they went into Kiel, where a short detour was made. Its object was to halt at the house of Post's

mistress, Marianne Heydt, to inform her he would be late for their theatre engagement that evening.

In a field outside the town, Catanach was shot in the back by Post. Soon afterwards the second car arrived on the scene. Into the field came the three prisoners Christenson, Fugelsang and Espelid, followed by their Gestapo executioners.

Seeing Catanach's body lying on the grass a few yards away, the RAF boys made a sudden movement towards him. As they stumbled forward, Post yelled to his men: "Go ahead, shoot!" Observing that one of the trio was merely wounded, and in fact attempting to struggle to his feet, Post grabbed the rifle held by Hans Kaehler and completed the murder.

Perfectly in character, he then announced that he was in a great hurry to return to Kiel. Jacobs and Schmidt must look after the bodies, and Kaehler arrange for the cremations. They drove into the town, dropping Kaehler at the crematorium, and Post joined his mistress at the theatre. More than three years afterwards, in the Hamburg courtroom, he was to boast that he had enjoyed his evening.

As for the traditional German "efficiency", an incredible example was disclosed during our investigation into the tragedy at Kiel. It appeared that in at least some cases the shooting orders from Berlin, sent by teleprinter, specifically declared that the executions should be arranged to take place during a stop for urinating (*während eine Pinkepause*) while the RAF officers were being transported by car.

Then there was the case of a certain devout man of religion, chief Gestapo officer Alfred Schimmel of Strasbourg. In all the horror of the Sagan affair here was one man whose conscience might well have lifted him to a high place in the history of heroic and selfless deeds. Instead, cowardice and hypocrisy made of him a criminal no better than some of his more brutish Gestapo companions. Schimmel had been recruited by the Nazis at a time when the Gestapo were eager, for various reasons of local politics, to get hold of a strongly-respected churchman. The portly Schimmel, a former solicitor with a wife and family, was a practising Roman Catholic well known to the church dignitaries and much liked in his district. When

the call came to join the Gestapo, in a senior position, he was attracted by the salary.

I was fascinated, but neither moved nor impressed, by the story that he told in London after the war. He it was who had received the usual Berlin order for the elimination of the last Sagan RAF officer to be killed—the boyish Anthony Hayter, a flight lieutenant, who was recaptured near the French border at Strasbourg and taken, like most of his friends in different towns, to the local *Kriminalpolizei* headquarters. After receiving their instructions that he was to be handed over to the Gestapo, they telephoned Schimmel asking that the RAF man be sent for.

By this time the dreadful tale of the Sagan murders had drifted around to most Gestapo stations and Schimmel knew well enough what had to happen. To the Kripo man he protested that he wanted nothing to do with the prisoner, but the local chief insisted that Berlin's orders must be complied with, and it was not long before Schimmel gave in. Hayter was received into his hands. It was Thursday. The same evening Schimmel made the arrangements. Highly significant, however, was the fact that he dispensed with the usual interrogation and holding of the prisoner.

The following day happened to be Good Friday. And the frightened, tortured Schimmel could not bear the thought of attending confession with the burden of a murderous deed so newly performed. He salved his conscience by rushing the execution through during the evening of Thursday, instructing his two Gestapo strong-arm assistants (two thugs called Drissna and Hilker, who were never traced) to take the young officer along the road towards Natzweiler Concentration Camp, carry out the shooting and deliver his body to the camp for cremation.

This they did. Schimmel dutifully reported the fulfilment of his orders. And next morning he was in church.

The striking aspect of his plea for mercy, however, was his version of how he had spent the afternoon of the crime, distressed, agitated and full of fear. From every angle, he declared, he had turned over in his mind methods of avoiding the act of murder. He had, he said, even consulted with colleagues and friends on how he might escape playing his appointed rôle.

He had contemplated the idea of cheating his instructions by taking Hayter across the French border, allowing him to go free, finally reporting his death and somehow procuring a casket of ashes to make the tale look authentic.

It was more than he could bear, pleaded Schimmel, to command the murder of the young airman who was innocent of any crime. But then he remembered the Gestapo penalties that were certain to fall, not only on himself but on his family, if he dared disobey. So he decided, conscience or no conscience, that murder was the easier way out.

Had he and all his family been executed by Himmler for failure to comply with Berlin's criminal decree, the name of Schimmel would indeed be honoured in Germany today. There was no doubt, I reflected, that the decision he faced was a hard one, and the choice fearful. It would be so for most men, but I was sickened, all the same, by the plea at the trial in Hamburg that his troubled conscience might be regarded as sufficient justification to warrant sparing his life.

Yet Schimmel, for all his self-pity and poverty of spirit, was a man of saintliness compared with the infamous killer of Zlyn, a small frontier town on the German-Czechoslovak border. His name was Erich August Zacharias and he was without doubt the most uncivilised, brutal and morally indecent character in the entire story of the Gestapo crimes against the escaping RAF men. Together with his local Gestapo boss, Hans Ziegler (who later committed suicide), he was responsible for the murder of Tom Kirby-Green, the British squadron leader who had lived in South Africa, and Flying Officer Gordon Kidder, one of six Canadians killed after the mass escape from Sagan.

We knew nothing of Zacharias during those first few months of fruitless search in Europe by Wing Commander Bowes. One day during the early spring of 1946, however, it was learned that a former Gestapo driver called Friedrich Kiowsky was being held in custody by the Czechs, who intended charging him on their own account with several murders. Bowes was allowed into Prague, where Kiowsky from his prison cell revealed version Number One of the events that took place at Zlyn during the last few days of March 1944.

It was clear that, apart from two drivers (Kiowsky and the Brno driver Fritz Schwarzer), three Gestapo officers were concerned with the planning and execution of the deaths of Kidder and Kirby-Green. One was Ziegler, another Zacharias. The third was their district senior, Adolf Knippelberg, head of the Gestapo at Brno.

Kiowsky disclosed that he was called one night into Ziegler's office, where Zacharias, Knippelberg and Ziegler were in conversation.

"Get the car ready. We have to take two English fliers to Breslau," Ziegler told the driver, Kiowsky.

An hour or so later Kirby-Green and Kidder were brought to the office from the local police prison. Both men, hatless, wearing sports jackets, unshaven and somewhat grimy after their three anxious days of freedom, were taken to the Gestapo cells.

Tom Kirby-Green, handcuffed, was then brought into an interrogation room. Kidder, also handcuffed, followed shortly after. Zacharias and two interpreters were present, and the driver, Kiowsky, was lounging outside.

Just what took place in that room during the ensuing hours will never be fully known. Officially, and in writing, Kiowsky told us: "Being curious, I looked into the interrogation room and saw that the handcuffs were being taken off the fliers. It was at this moment that Ziegler entered. When trying to remove the handcuffs from one of the men he was unable to free one of his hands, and had to tear it away." Ziegler had told the interpreter, added Kiowsky, that he should inform the RAF men in English that "when tramps are encountered they must be treated like tramps".

The interrogations continued until ten o'clock that night. At two o'clock next morning, two cars set out from Zlyn Gestapo. Kiowsky drove the first vehicle, with Zacharias and Gordon Kidder. Schwarzer was at the wheel of the second car, with Knippelberg and Kirby-Green.

They drove mostly in silence in the direction of a town called Moravska Ostrava. On the way Kiowsky enquired of Zacharias what was to happen to the two men.

"Zacharias sat beside me and said nothing, but turned his

thumb downwards," Kiowsky told us in his statement from Prague.

The journey ended a few miles from Moravska Ostrava. Kidder and Kirby-Green were taken from the cars and shot by the roadside. Zacharias and Knippelberg pulled the triggers.

In my office at London Cage I sat scanning Kiowsky's words. I had almost reached the end of his story when suddenly a new thought exploded in my mind and I began retracing, paragraph by paragraph, searching for the line I wanted. Finding it, I sat with pencil poised on the spot as if afraid to lose it; and over and over again I read just four words: "*Zacharias sat beside me . . .*"

For the rest of the day I could not rid my mind of the phrase. Zacharias sat *beside* him, declared driver Kiowsky. So Gordon Kidder had sat alone in the rear seat, without a guard? It just didn't make sense, unless . . .

As the thought grew stronger, it began to fit in with a story we had got from the Czechs. The bodies of Kidder and Kirby-Green, they told us, were moved to the crematorium at Moravska Ostrava and placed in a room whose door the Germans carefully sealed off. A doctor had twice asked to be allowed to examine the bodies before cremation. Twice the request was refused. No Czech official was permitted to inspect them before they were destroyed in the furnace.

What did all this mean, I wondered? Could it be that these two men underwent some other ordeal before dying? Could *that* be the reason why Kidder sat unguarded, alone in the rear of the car, while Zacharias and his driver were able to travel in front with their backs to the prisoner?

In our postwar investigation we learned enough to be fairly certain that during the interrogations at Zlyn, Ziegler and Zacharias decided to remove the handcuffs from the two RAF captives. And the evidence available suggested that the manacles were probably dragged from their wrists *without being unlocked*.

The fiendish Erich Zacharias was eventually caught (like Johannes Post, of Kiel, he was given away by a deserted wife) and brought to London Cage. A wild young brute—he was no more than thirty—he was short, sharp-featured, possessing

abnormally large, powerful hands, a remarkably thick neck, and a long criminal record apart from the murders of Kidder and Kirby-Green. What impressed me from the start, however, was the clear delight he took in telling of his bestial activities.

In considerable detail he described how he was one day carrying out what he termed a "forthright" interrogation and, much to his annoyance, when he emerged from the room he saw a young Czech employee, a girl, seated on a bench in the corridor, waiting to deliver a message. Realising at once that the girl had overheard his ruthless performance in the interrogation room, he decided to take self-protective action.

Greeting the girl most amiably, he took the message, looked at his watch and invited her to lunch. They got into his car and drove off. Ten kilometres outside Zlyn he stopped, forced the girl to the roadside, raped her, shot her dead, dug a hole, buried her body, drove back into town, enjoyed a comfortable lunch and returned to work. He showed neither remorse for the act nor compunction about describing it when he related his story after the war.

By the time Zacharias was brought to me at London Cage we were in possession of most of the evidence revealing his guilt in the RAF shootings. Still, however, I was nagged by that other thought... what happened in the interrogation room at Zlyn?

I spent almost an hour discussing the point with Zacharias but got nowhere. I observed his broad unpleasant grin as I persisted with the questioning. He admitted his rôle in the killing—of that there was no doubt—but refused to be drawn on the point of ill-treatment.

Next day I tried an experiment. Zacharias was a loud, naïve showman, and it seemed possible that with a little dramatisation we might succeed in getting him to disclose rather more of the truth than had gone into his written statement. So I called several of my unit officers into the room and announced that we would attempt to reconstruct part of the interrogation scene at Zlyn, with ourselves in the leading positions.

I became "Zacharias"; another officer stood by as "Ziegler"; a third was the German "interpreter". The real Zacharias knelt

on the floor after the fashion of Nazi interrogations. "Let us assume that you are the RAF prisoner," I told him, adding: "I can't remove your handcuffs because you're not wearing any—but perhaps you will tell us whether these were the correct positions; and perhaps you will tell us just what really happened. What did you do that made it possible for you to shove these men in the backs of your cars without escorts while you drove them to their place of death?"

Zacharias shook his head and rose to his feet. Again I put the question, but he refused to speak.

My experiment, lasting five minutes, had failed. "Take him away," I declared, "and feed him on kindness and cups of tea."

Chapter Eleven

SAGAN—THE LAST ACT

THE chickens—or were they vultures?—came home to roost over my unfortunate if unbowed head during the first Sagan trial at Hamburg in 1947.

In the dock were eighteen Nazis, some of them guilty of crimes which even in the black record of Himmler's Gestapo looked more than usually foul. Yet at more than one stage in those fifty days of courtroom wrangling, a stranger to such peculiar affairs might have suspected that the arch-criminal of them all was a British Army intelligence officer known as Colonel Alexander Scotland.

It was, I suppose, inevitable that in a last desperate fling to avoid the hangman's noose, the notion of discrediting our methods at London Cage seemed as good a device as any: the old game of mud-slinging in the hope that some of the mud might stick. All the same, I was startled by the monstrous character of some of the "revelations"—which provided, as might be guessed, a good deal of first-rate copy for newspapers.

Violence against our Gestapo prisoners in London; starvation; deprivation of sleep; "third-degree" methods of interrogation; even torture by electric shock; these were among the more fantastic allegations that stirred the No. 1 Courtroom of the Curio Haus at Hamburg where the Sagan trial opened on July 1, 1947.

Long before we got to Hamburg the villainous Erich Zacharias had caused a brief furore in England by hacking his way out of prison. Having cut away the wood around the lock of his cell door he got into the prison yard, climbed the fence, swung into the branches of a tree and dropped to the ground; the escape was short-lived, however, for in the process Zacharias lost a shoe, and was unable to travel fast. While the morning papers blared forth the news that one of the Gestapo's

worst desperadoes was at large, he hid in a wood some three miles from the prison but was picked up by mid-afternoon, and the scare was over.

So, to Hamburg. Eighteen Nazis ranging from the high-ranking policeman Max Wielen and the astute lawyer Josef Gmeiner, to the low-grade Gestapo toughs like Johannes Post, Emil Weil—and Zacharias. Many more should have been in the dock beside them; but at least we had eighteen.

The Hamburg Curio Haus, commemorating a nineteenth-century educationist called Curio, had been built as a music centre with a large ground-floor concert hall, complete with organ. Here, judges and accused faced each other across the long narrow room, with spectators on tiered seats at both ends and another hundred or so getting a bird's-eye view from the balcony. The Sagan Case provided its debut as a court of law for the Curio Haus.

As chief of the War Crimes Investigation Unit, responsible for pre-trial interrogations and production of the evidence against the accused, I was appearing as a witness for the prosecution. All the accused had passed through London Cage, where their statements had been written, translated and copied, and these statements presented to the court formed a basis for the charges to be made against the eighteen Germans.

When not in the witness box, I sat at the table where the Prosecutor—the broad, painstaking Colonel Richard Halse—was to spend the next two months immersed in the verbal pursuit of justice on behalf of those fifty murdered POWs of the RAF who had tunnelled their way out of Stalag Luft III camp some three-and-a-half years before.

The Court President was Major-General H. L. Longden. Beside him on the dais were the grey-wigged Judge Advocate, Mr. C. L. Stirling, and the six military court members consisting of three army colonels, two RAF wing commanders and an air commodore. The witness box was flanked by a battery of buzzing interpreters.

When I first saw the team of ten black-gowned German lawyers, nine men and one woman, who were to defend the eighteen accused Germans, I had an unaccountable feeling that there might be trouble ahead. I watched that cheerful sadist,

the insolent Johannes Post of Kiel, grinning as he whispered in the ear of the woman counsel—a Dr. Anna Oehlert, with whom I was soon to clash. And under the bright lights, as cameras clicked and turned, and flash bulbs popped in an unseemly pandemonium, I wondered. . . .

While the photographers bustled I had time, too, to gaze on these men in the dock whose personalities I had come to know so well. There was old Max Wielen, one-time chief of police at Breslau, looking like a bad-tempered tiger, hating his involvement with these Gestapo brutes in a high-level plan for murder, of which he was fully informed even though he had pulled no trigger.

There too was Alfred Schimmel, the respected man of religion, who had hurried his victim to death on the Thursday evening before commencing his Good Friday devotions. Not far away sat Josef Gmeiner, the Karlsruhe lawyer and Gestapo chief; next to him his gangsters, Otto Preiss and Heinrich Boschert, and his chief assistant, Walter Herberg. Beyond them, the Munich Gestapo crew.

And, of course, Zacharias of Zlyn; in theory, not a Gestapo servant, having been employed by the frontier police called *Grenzpolizei*, though that department was controlled by the Gestapo (from whom in any case Zacharias had nothing to learn in the art of criminal brutality).

It was fitting that the first witness for the prosecution should be none other than that indefatigable tunnelling expert from Stalag Luft III, Wing Commander Henry Marshall, one of the escaping prisoners who had survived after the long crawl through the tunnel called "Harry". He told the court how the great breakout had been planned and operated. After being the first man out of the tunnel, Marshall was captured and taken to the local gaol at Sagan.

"There I was stripped and searched and later interrogated for thirty-five minutes," he told the court. "Other men told me later that they were informed, 'You will never see your wife and family again.'"

"Those travelling by rail (my partner and I were intending to make for the station) were given priority of place through the tunnel in order to catch their trains. I was dressed in

Australian Air Force trousers, a ranker's jacket suitably altered to simulate 'civvies', a ski cap and a dyed overcoat. The majority of the travellers wore fairly presentable 'civvies', nine-tenths of which were manufactured in the camp."

Wing Commander Marshall added the nice point that there was no definite order that the RAF men should attempt to escape, but "every officer was expected to do his duty".

As for that stormy Sunday morning scene at Hitler's Berchtesgaden, a telling picture was drawn by Major-General Adolf Westhoff, former head of the German Army prisoner-of-war department. Each of the Nazi leaders had accused the other of responsibility for the calamity of the mass escape, and when General von Graevenitz, Westhoff's immediate boss, later protested that the order to shoot prisoners was a violation of the Geneva Convention, Keitel had retorted: "The time has come. An example must be made. I hope this one will suffice to produce such a shock that no further escapes will be attempted."

There was also the invaluable Peter Mohr, former *Kriminalkommissar*, whose evidence provided the basis of the prosecution case against Max Wielen and others. He told of the urns containing the RAF officers' ashes being despatched from all over Germany to Wielen's Breslau office. He told of the top-secret teleprint issued on the orders of Gestapo ruler, Heinrich Himmler, arranging the murders. And he told how he (Mohr) was later called to the home of General Mueller to learn of the excitement and fuss produced in high Nazi circles by the impact of what was already being called "the Sagan Case". Mueller informed him that long speeches concerning the murders were being made in the House of Commons, that the British Government was already making diplomatic moves in the affair, and that Von Ribbentrop, embarrassed by it all, had demanded an explanation from Himmler.

Then, said Mohr, a conference was called in Mueller's office. New reports on the shootings had to be written. "You and your officials," Mueller announced, "must now be in a position to reconstruct the process of the shootings. An international commission is expected to arrive. The new reports will no longer be treated as secret, but as ordinary teleprinter messages—and

the shootings also will no longer be kept secret, as this would appear suspicious to a commission."

Mohr went on to describe how the answers to the Swiss Protesting Power were prepared and drafted. First, they outlined the basic necessity for the killings; secondly, the details—such as, for example, the story of one officer being "drowned" while trying to swim a river, and another killed in a motor accident.

The mountain of guilt was soon made plain. But the justification was still to come. When the case was a week old I was called into the witness box to substantiate each of the prisoners' written statements, which were then read to the court.

Some were lengthy dissertations with outstandingly blatant passages of callous excusal or comment. "*In my thoughts,*" wrote Eduard Geith, one of the Munich Gestapo gang, "*I feel the most unhappy man since this happening.*" He did not take part in the murder out of personal interest, he added, but only because it was an order . . . "*I could have refused this order, but I am convinced that a refusal would have had the severest consequences.*"

Referring to a date in 1944 the lawyer Josef Gmeiner, ex-Karlsruhe Gestapo head, volunteered the curious information, "*I note that round March 19 (my Saint's day) I spent . . .*" etcetera.

Otto Preiss, making no denial of having shot young Dennis Cochran, somehow found it possible to state, "*I do not consider myself guilty; I only acted in accordance with orders.*" He concluded his statement with the baffling remark, "*This was my first and last execution*" (though he might well have added the phrase, "excepting my own").

Zacharias of Zlyn, also admitting his rôle, wrote that Ziegler and Knippelberg seemed to have talked first about the method for the shooting, adding: "*I had no objections to their proposals or instructions and for that reason I said nothing. I carried out the task first because it was an order, secondly because I was assured that nothing could happen to me later, and also because I justified myself there was a war on and that the airmen might have killed hundreds of civilians by bombing.*"

The wretched Major Alfred Schimmel, who had directed the murder of Flight-Lieutenant Tony Hayter at Strasbourg, told

of his "*spiritual struggle*" to avoid taking part in the crime. During the trial a strong and lengthy plea for mercy was made on his behalf by two high dignitaries of the Church, but the testimonial to Schimmel's character given by the well-known Monsignor and his colleague proved unsuccessful.

It was a strange processional. As each statement was read to the court I was asked to confirm that the prisoner had himself written the original and signed it in my presence, or in the presence of one of my deputies. Defending counsel were then allowed to question me on the statements and, as this process commenced, I was instructed by the President to keep my answers short.

For the most part the questions were in no way extraordinary. Not so, however, the impact of the written statements, for one noted the gasps of astonishment from German spectators as these confessions of savage killing were declaimed one after another.

The real shooting match, with myself as target, began when Dr. Oehlert—she defended Erich Zacharias—sprang to her feet protesting, or at least suggesting, that her client's statement had been obtained under duress; and for this reason she objected to submission of his statement.

Answering Dr. Oehlert's questions, I first explained that our system of organisation at London Cage provided for the investigation of any complaints made by prisoners. I pointed out, in addition, that under the terms of the Geneva Convention prisoners could be employed on cleaning work, adding that this was not in any way a form of disciplinary treatment. Then came the following exchange:

DR. OEHLERT: "Surely, as a British soldier, you are familiar with the types of Army punishment?"

SCOTLAND: "The only army in which I have served for any length of time as a private soldier is the German Army. I do not know the punishments in the British Army."

DR. OEHLERT: "When were you a member of the German Army?"

SCOTLAND: "I served in the German Army from 1903 to 1907."

DR. OEHLERT: "Have you ever heard of the punishment of cleaning up a room with a toothbrush?"

SCOTLAND: "It sounds very stupid. I have not heard of it."

DR. OEHLERT: "I am very surprised that you, with four years' service in the German Army, do not know anything about that. Would you be astonished that my client alleges that such singular punishments were given in the London Cage?"

SCOTLAND: "Yes."

DR. OEHLERT: "You interrogated Zacharias ten times. Why so many?"

SCOTLAND: "I was instructed that prisoners should not be seen for longer than one hour at a time to avoid pressure on them."

DR. OEHLERT: "It must have happened frequently that in putting a statement of one accused to another, he, by admitting it, implicated himself?"

SCOTLAND: "He had plenty of time, sometimes three or four days, to make up his mind what he wished to write, and to turn over in his mind whether it would implicate him or not."

At the following day's hearing came still more startling accusations. For Dr. Oehlert, still objecting to the submission of the Zacharias statement, declared that her client had complained "that he was several times beaten about the face in London Cage, that food was withheld from him for several days, that on many days when he was interrogated he was not allowed to sleep at night".

It seemed to me that by this time there was hardly much point in giving flat and sensible denials to such charges, and with a patient smile I replied, perhaps ineptly: "If that were true he should have made a complaint and we would have done something about it."

Dr. Oehlert went on: "Zacharias says that you threatened him with electrical devices." I replied: "Quite untrue. We have no weapons and no such devices in the London Cage" (as it happened, I did not even have the privilege of an electric plug socket in my room at The Cage).

And so it went on until, when another defence counsel suggested I had told prisoners in London that they would be hanged and their wives "deported to Siberia where they would



Above: One of the graves of the “Norfolks” who were massacred at Paradis.

William O’Callaghan and Albert Pooley (right)—the two men who miraculously survived the slaughter—arriving at Hamburg to attend the War Crimes Court.



The inscription on the back of this drawing reads : " To Lt.-Col.
A. P. Scotland. As a token of my gratitude for the years of
devoted endeavour to correct my condemnation at Venice and
procure my rehabilitation. KESSELRING, General Field
Marshal. Bad Wiessee, January 1953 ".

become common property", I could only describe it all as complete nonsense.

As things turned out, Dr. Oehlert's request that the Zacharias statement should be ruled out of court was firmly refused.

Another day, considerable fuss was made of what became known as "the hair-pulling incident". This was a point that greatly interested Dr. Oehlert. Answering complaints that we had employed such odd methods of extorting confessions from prisoners at The Cage, I made some effort to describe the true background of this tale. The first time I came into contact with the notion of hair-pulling as a form of treatment for prisoners was when a *released British prisoner* complained one day at The Cage that handfuls of hair had been pulled out of *his* head by a guard in a German camp.

This allegation interested me because it seemed not only an unlikely form of torture but possibly an ineffective one. So, in the presence of several witnesses at London Cage, I proceeded to give a demonstration designed to show that it was impossible greatly to harm a man by pulling his hair even when considerable force was used.

One of my own British assistants, an NCO, agreed to become the guinea-pig for this test. First, he sprawled on the floor, and I took a firm grip on his hair. Finally, I dragged him in this manner across the room . . . with the result that when I released my hold, only a few strands of hair were seen to be left in my hand. What was more important, the "victim" suffered no hurt. All this I told the court.

The difficulty, of course, in describing such scenes in a courtroom, open to Press and public, was that this and similar stories received widespread publicity. And, as often happens, some of the newspaper headlines were wildly inaccurate, as, for example . . . *Gestapo Men Were Not Beaten—But Had Hair Pulled*. The inevitable result was that a nasty taste was left behind. Colonel Scotland could deny what he pleased, but was there perhaps some grain of truth in the allegations? Were there perhaps some dark doings in that mysterious house in Kensington Palace Gardens called the London Cage?

Clearly, it was not my job to turn the Hamburg Trials into

a defence of my personal reputation; nor would such an irrelevant tactic have been permitted. I was greatly troubled, nevertheless, by the constant focus on our supposed shortcomings at The Cage, for it seemed to me that these manufactured tales of cruelty towards our German prisoners were fast becoming the chief item of news, while the brutal fate of those fifty RAF officers was in danger of becoming old history.

The fact was that even after the war the SS organisation continued to make its influence felt. During the Sagan trial I picked up one especially alarming item of evidence, suggesting that the handling of the Hamburg court cases from the German viewpoint was being subjected to a measure of underground control by the SS.

I learned, for example, that even the Hamburg court office had an SS spy among its employees. Not until many months after the Sagan trial had ended was I able to make good use of this information, with the result that this spy was dismissed from his post. This much was certain, however: the allegations of ill-treatment at London Cage were directly inspired by the remnants of the Hamburg SS.

As for our methods at The Cage, it was to be expected that the world should be intrigued by the success with which we had persuaded substantial numbers of Nazi criminals not only to confess their rôle in murder plans, but also to write the detailed story of the events surrounding the crimes and the activities of their own colleagues.

Those documents were our real triumph. But how was it all done? What were the secret methods employed to obtain such confessions?

There was no mystery. It was no easy task, but there was no mystery. Consider the situation of our German guests at the London Cage. They were all experts in the arts of extracting information from others, with no scruples as to the technique. When they in turn became prisoners and were brought to London for questioning, they were eager enough to tell sufficient of their story to demonstrate their individual blamelessness.

Many, however, committed the fatal error of under-

estimating our intimacy with German habits, personalities and language, as well as with the facts of the Sagan outrages.

After the preliminary interrogation my practice was to send each man to his room to write his version of events—in his own style. He was permitted no contact with other prisoners while this exercise went on. And whether we were facing the Gestapo men of Munich, or Saarbruecken, or Kiel, or Breslau, it was not long before we had at our disposal up to half-a-dozen histories—dealing in each case with the same crime viewed by different men.

In this manner, discrepancies were noted, lies detected, names and places and times checked, triple-checked and checked yet again. Gradually, we came to know when we were arriving at the probable truth and, eventually, with much patience and interrogation, we knew that in most cases we had ferreted out the whole truth, or at least enough of the truth to establish a case for the court.

We of the London Cage were determined that our labours should not be wasted, even though we had many doubts about the wisdom of employing intelligence officers on matters that were essentially a lawyer's business. We were not so foolish as to imagine that petty violence, nor even violence of a stronger character, was likely to produce the results we hoped for in dealing with some of the toughest creatures of the Hitler régime.

On September 3, 1947, eight years to the day since the outbreak of the Second World War, the Hamburg court pronounced its verdicts. Of the eighteen Germans, fourteen were to hang. Two were sentenced to imprisonment for life, two more received ten years. Later, the death sentence on Heinrich Boschert, one of Gmeiner's gang, was commuted to life imprisonment.

In Hamelin Gaol, six months later, the thirteen were hanged... Zacharias, of Zlyn; Johannes Post and Hans Kaehler, of Kiel; Oscar Schmidt and Walter Jakobs, also of Kiel; Emil Weil, Eduard Geith and Johann Schneider, of Munich; Alfred Schimmel, of Strasbourg; Josef Gmeiner, Otto Preiss and Walter Herberg, of Karlsruhe; Emil Schultz, of Saarbruecken. Max Wielen, the Breslau police chief, was

sentenced to life imprisonment but released after serving a few years of his term.

It was not quite the end of the reckoning. In 1948, a second trial took place at Hamburg, with three more Gestapo men in the dock. Erwin Wiczorek and Richard Haensel were charged with being concerned in the Breslau murders, the case emerging from the evidence produced at the first trial.

And there was Bruchardt, of Danzig, a broad, ape-like Nazi (picked up later), who was known not merely to have committed large numbers of brutal crimes but to have boasted of his deeds. He was charged with the murders of RAF prisoners, Tim Walenn, Henri Picard, Gordon Brettell and Romas Marcinkus. He was convicted and sentenced to death, but he did not hang. Instead, he received the traditional twenty-one-year term of life imprisonment. Doubtless he will be walking the streets of busy postwar Germany before long.

On the Breslau account, Haensel was acquitted, but Wiczorek was found guilty and sentenced to death. Wiczorek, however, was even more fortunate than his Gestapo comrade from Danzig. He had pleaded that he was not one of the shooting squad at the actual scene of the roadside murder when the first six Sagan escapees met their deaths. So Wiczorek's sentence was not confirmed and he was soon set free.

The Sagan Case was ended but its story should not be forgotten. The men who tunnelled at Stalag Luft III, and survived to tell the tale, should not be forgotten. The fifty who tunnelled, and did not survive, should not be forgotten. And the fact that there are ex-Gestapo murderers alive in Germany today might also be remembered.

Chapter Twelve

NORWAY UNDER THE NAZIS

IN wartime Norway—if you were a privileged German or a Nazi collaborator—life could be very, very gay. Packed, in fact, with the choicest food, sport, entertainment, and inexpensive wines and women. For, in Norway, the Germans created their own Good Time Corner of stricken Europe. Safe, secure, comfortable, with no bombs, little fighting, few shortages, almost no war at all, the occupied country became a miniature dump for surplus food and liquor looted from France. There were race meetings, dances and parties to be enjoyed in and around Oslo, and the capital was also adorned by plenty of bright young things shipped over from Berlin, so-called secretaries not notably proficient with their typewriters but abundantly endowed with other and more seductive qualifications.

For the decent Norwegian population it was a time of sad, patient waiting; along the western coast fjords, aiding the Commando raiders who came periodically from England; elsewhere, carrying out what they could in the way of sabotage; and everywhere, in town or village, carefully noting the activities and demeanour of the enemy. Only a few, led by that arch-collaborator, the hated Vidkun Quisling, and those minor “quislings” he gathered around himself, joined in the rollicking pursuits of the German invaders.

When the occupation was completed in 1940, Hitler appointed two men who came to dominate the Norwegian scene. One was the out-and-out Nazi called Terboven, a former *Gauleiter* from the Ruhr, who was placed in charge of civilian forces, police, internal security and the SD and Gestapo organisation.

The other, and theoretically the senior man, was General Nicholas von Falkenhorst, who became chief in Norway of all the military forces, land, sea and air. Falkenhorst, who at the

outbreak of war had been a comparatively insignificant officer commanding a division in East Prussia, was perhaps the most selfish opportunist in the hierarchy of German generals. Certainly he was no Rommel or Rundstedt either in character or ability. Hitler had always grumbled over his lack of success with the Old School generals of the Wehrmacht, few of whom could honestly stomach either his Nazi creed or his military methods; but in the ambitious von Falkenhorst he soon found a willing supporter. And, doubtless as a reward for loyal adherence, the Fuehrer selected him for the plum job of running affairs in Norway. Falkenhorst was then aged fifty-five.

Well content with this senior appointment, the General set up his headquarters in Oslo. By 1942, he knew that no other German commander could be enjoying a more comfortable assignment than that of C.-in-C. Norway, for at no time was the German occupation in any real danger.

To cope with the more troublesome tasks such as subordinating the Norwegian communities, there was the super-thug, *Reichskommissar* Terboven, who lived in one of the royal palaces. And making the life of ease yet more agreeable from the German viewpoint, there was also Vidkun Quisling, dubbed Senior Minister, who gave the enemy every possible co-operation. Backed by a small force of his own men, known as the Norwegian Gestapo, he was answerable to Falkenhorst and Terboven for the well-being and good behaviour of the civilian population. To bolster his importance, Quisling was installed in a magnificently-furnished historic mansion, where Falkenhorst became a frequent guest.

There appear to have been few limits to Vidkun Quisling's degeneracy, quite apart from the fact of his treacherous work on Hitler's behalf. When I visited Oslo in 1945 to investigate the outrages which eventually brought Falkenhorst firmly into the list of war criminals, my informants provided countless examples of the much-despised Quisling's behaviour.

Perhaps the most outstanding, if also the crudest, of pointers to the man's character was a story concerning two German secretaries and an expensive fur coat. One evening, so the story went, Quisling's smart and worldly female assistants were awaiting his return to the luxurious apartment which served as

his office. As he entered the big salon, Quisling tossed a coat into an armchair. It was a Russian fur of considerable beauty and splendour.

The secretaries gasped at the sight of it and at once began bombarding him with questions. "Where did it come from? How did you get it? Who owns it?" the girls enquired. Quisling grinned and clapped his hands. "Never mind the questions," he said. "Let's have a little race. Away you go, girls. . . . And the first one back at my desk completely undressed gets the coat."

Without another word the pair scuttled from the room, scattering their clothes as they ran. A few seconds later the girls were rushing back to claim the coveted reward. History, it seems, does not record which of the two was successful.

When this incident was related to me in Oslo I wondered if the tale had acquired some embroidery with age and the telling, but I was inclined on reflection to accept it at full face value, for this was but one among many other substantiated episodes which revealed the moral and social climate prevailing among upper-bracket Nazis and their friends.

This, then, was the background to a somewhat lazy war so far as it affected the German invaders. The enterprising British Commando troops and naval forces, along with a few hundred Norwegian exiles, provided problems which disturbed the routine from time to time; and the German security people were kept on their toes; but the menace remained small; for the most part the campaign was a military holiday compared with the activity on all other war fronts.

On October 18, 1942, Adolf Hitler himself threw a verbal grenade into Falkenhorst's peaceful Norwegian parlour. On that day, he signed a decree which became known as the Hitler *Befehl*. Only twelve copies were issued, of which Falkenhorst received No. 4. It was a top-secret order which was to have tragic and far-reaching consequences. In essence, the *Befehl* was a "no quarter" order directed against Commando raiders operating in any theatre of war, and the Fuehrer expressed his decisions in four important paragraphs. He wrote as follows (the italics are mine):

"From now on, all opponents brought to battle by German troops in so-called Commando operations in Europe or in Africa, even when it is outwardly a matter of soldiers in uniform or demolition parties with or without weapons, *are to be exterminated to the last man in battle or while in flight*. In these cases it is immaterial whether they are landed for their operations by ship or aeroplane or descend by parachute. Even should these individuals, on their being discovered, make as if to surrender, all quarter is to be denied them on principle. A detailed report is to be sent to the OKW on each separate case for publication in the Wehrmacht communiqué.

"If individual members of such Commandos working as agents, saboteurs, etc., fall into the hands of the Wehrmacht by other means—e.g. through the Police in any of the countries occupied by us—they are to be handed over to the SD immediately. It is strictly forbidden to hold them in military custody, e.g. in PW Camps, etc., even as a temporary measure.

"This instruction does not apply to the treatment of those enemy soldiers who are taken prisoner in open battle or who surrender in the course of normal battle operations (offensives, large-scale landing operations and large-scale air-landing operations). Equally little does this regulation apply to enemy soldiers who have fallen into our hands after naval encounters or are seeking to save their lives by parachute after air-battles.

"In the case of non-execution of this order, I shall make responsible before a Court Martial all commanders and officers who have either failed to carry out their duty in instructing the troops in this order, or who act contrary to this order in carrying it out.

(Sgd.) A. HITLER"

Now this decree as it stood was *almost* a legitimate order. According to the accepted rules of conduct in war, there was nothing illegal about the idea of "no quarter to be given"—in short, a policy of complete extermination of the enemy *during combat*, a policy that could be applied equally to Commando raiders and to units on any field of battle.

The legitimacy of such an order, however, is determined by one condition: it may be issued by a commander on the strict understanding that its terms are made known not only to his own troops but also to the enemy. What turned the *Befehl* into a totally illegal document was the plain, undeniable fact that it was marked "Top Secret". In addition, it was accompanied by a lengthy note of explanation—also top secret—giving the Fuehrer's reasons for the decree. It ended abruptly with the odd statement: "Should it prove advisable to spare one or two men in the first instance for interrogation reasons, they are to be shot immediately after their interrogation" . . . a conclusion that seemed strangely contradictory to the terms of the actual *Befehl*.

The *Befehl* was illegal by virtue of its top-secret nature, but it was not in itself an order to murder, despite the confusion arising out of the "shooting" reference at the end of Hitler's accompanying notes. It is interesting to recall that both Rommel and Kesselring received the *Befehl* and refrained from passing it on to the officers under their command.

Alone of the German generals who got the Fuehrer's document, Nicholas von Falkenhorst decided to invest it with a truly lethal force. He took it upon himself, indeed, to go one better than Hitler. For in Norway Falkenhorst issued his own version of the *Befehl*, and added to its ruthless character in a peculiarly savage fashion. Riveting his attention on the final words of Hitler's explanatory note, Falkenhorst's order contained the startling new provision: "IF A MAN IS SAVED FOR INTERROGATION HE MUST NOT SURVIVE HIS COMRADES FOR MORE THAN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS."

Not even Adolf Hitler had gone that far in his instructions to the German commanders.

Despite his protestations (how often I had heard such pleas from suspected war criminals) that Hitler's decree had shocked him to the marrow (but of course he "had no choice"—how often I heard *that* too!) the case against Falkenhorst when he was tried at Brunswick in July 1946 was heavily weighted by a set of vital documents that were placed before the court—the most damning of these being the voluntary statements he made

to me at London Cage during the fortnight following his arrival in England.

Demoralised, dejected and aged (Falkenhorst was then sixty-one years old, but looked seventy), he listened in silence as I reminded him of the ghastly deeds which had followed his zealous interpretation of Hitler's orders. Then he returned to his small back room on the top floor at London Cage, where day after day and far into each night he sat undisturbed to write his own story. Each morning he would come to my office to discuss his statements or answer questions. In the end I sent him, a most depressed man, to the comforts of the special senior officers' POW camp at Bridge End in South Wales, there to await trial.

What precisely were the crimes with which Falkenhorst was concerned? Altogether, he faced nine charges. The chief one related to his orders that prisoners should be killed; his ruthless adaptation, in other words, of the Hitler *Befehl*. On this question the General's own words were of some importance. Formally declaring that he had received the order, together with the "reasons" for it, he went on:

"From these 'reasons' and especially from the last paragraph, I made some extract which, together with the original order, I distributed to the Commanders of the Navy, Air Force and Army in Norway. I cannot remember the exact wording of this extract but I put the last sentence in the following words: 'If a man is saved for interrogation, he must not survive his comrades for more than twenty-four hours.'"

Other charges against him arose specifically out of the murder of certain prisoners who were captured following Commando operations. To all, as to the main charge, he pleaded Not Guilty.

Outstanding among these events in Norway was a gallant effort by British airborne forces to fulfil their perilous mission of crossing southern Norway to destroy a heavy-water plant, vital to the current work on Germany's atomic weapons. A Combined Ops. affair under the code name "Operation Freshman".

Two Halifax aircraft drawing gliders took off from England for the Norwegian coast one mid-November evening in 1942.

Thirty-one men, including two officers, were aboard; all were in sappers' uniform with ski-ing kit worn underneath.

It was a tragic flight, for the aircraft ran into terrible weather conditions and were forced to uncouple both gliders which crash-landed as soon as they crossed the rocky Norwegian coastline. One was forced down near the town of Egersund. The other landed further north on the cliffs above Lyse Fjord, not far from Stavanger.

Nine survivors from the second glider were put to death after being handed over, on Falkenhorst's instructions, to the Gestapo. Fourteen men from the first glider were shot by troops of the Wehrmacht under Falkenhorst's command.

The fate of these fourteen British prisoners who landed at Egersund, and the stepping-stones which led to Falkenhorst's responsibility for their deaths, became a key subject during his trial at Brunswick. At the time of the crash-landing Falkenhorst's area commander, General von Behrens, was not at his headquarters, but the incident was reported to him by his chief of staff, Colonel Probst. With fourteen prisoners—British soldiers in uniform captured by the German Army—on his hands, Probst could not decide whether they came under the terms of the Hitler *Befehl*, and von Behrens, his chief, was equally afraid to assume responsibility. He passed the buck to Falkenhorst in Oslo. But Falkenhorst was as indecisive as the rest. He telephoned General Keitel in Berlin.

Keitel gave him short shrift, told him to act in accordance with the Fuehrer's command and declined to discuss the matter further. So the decision, after all, was up to von Falkenhorst. The prisoners were duly shot, crudely and inefficiently, by members of the German 355 Infantry Regiment acting under the direction of Colonel Probst.

In court we heard a German soldier's description of the scene. He was Sergeant Kurt Hagedorn of No. 11 Company, 355 Regiment, and his words carried a striking simplicity as well as the ring of truth:

"One morning in November 1942, I learned from some of my comrades that Leutnant Muecke, Unteroffizier Licht and still some more soldiers had been awakened to capture English soldiers in the area of our battalion.

"The same morning I saw from my room that English soldiers were brought to the Military Hospital. The time was 10.00 hours. All these soldiers wore military uniform (brown)—the same uniform as the English soldiers are wearing.

"I heard that about seventeen English soldiers had been in the plane, among whom were also three officers. . . . Later on I learned that three of the crew were dead.

"From four to five o'clock I was standing outside my barrack and saw how the English soldiers from the Military Hospital in the Burmastrasse were carried in the direction of the ammunition store under guard. At the same time I heard rifle fire. Unteroffizier Fiedler and I went to the place from whence the shots had come and saw still more English soldiers at a distance of about a hundred metres being brought to the shooting place.

"I have seen four Germans carrying an English soldier, who had been shot, to a hole about five metres away from the shooting place. These four Germans returned to the ammunition store. Then I saw an English soldier being led forward to the shooting place, watched by, I should think, four Germans. The English soldier was then handed over to Unteroffizier Wagner. Unteroffizier Wagner has then brought him to the place, and has ordered him to take his coat off and face the Burmastrasse. The Erschiessungskommando then came out from the ammunition store and placed itself on a line opposite the English soldier, about six to eight metres away from the English soldier. They were armed with guns.

"Unteroffizier Wagner was standing about five to six metres away from the English soldier. He said 'Feuer frei', and then the soldiers have fired. The English soldier fell to the ground, and then Wagner went to the soldier who had been shot, and shot him with a pistol through his head.

"The dead body was then carried to a hole by four Germans. The German soldiers then went back to the ammunition, and then came another English soldier. . . . I saw two or three English soldiers being shot. All the dead bodies were carried into the same hole.

"Later on I heard that these Englishmen had been shot as saboteurs. I think one of the officers has told the soldiers that all saboteurs had to be shot within twenty-four hours. Formerly

I have heard nothing about this. I have heard that the English had been wearing civilian clothes under the uniform. I have not seen that they have been wearing civilian clothes. As the English soldiers had to take their coats off when they were to be shot, I saw that they were wearing khaki shirts.

"The next day Polish prisoners had to take the dead bodies out of the hole and place them on a lorry."

At his trial, Falkenhorst not only disclaimed responsibility for ordering the shootings but changed his mind about the time of his phone call to Keitel, declaring in court that he had been confused, that he had phoned Berlin, not in connection with the Egersund shooting at all, but later, to consult with Keitel about the second glider crash at Stavanger (these latter being the prisoners who were handed over to the Gestapo).

It was a lengthy, complicated effort to escape from justice, but the issue was succinctly framed by Colonel Halse in his closing speech for the prosecution.

"The accused," he said, "is charged quite definitely and deliberately with being concerned in the killing of those fourteen prisoners-of-war, and, as I said in my opening speech, that was a cold-blooded murder; there was no reason for that murder; the *Fuehrer-Befehl* said nothing about it, and it is my submission that that murder was committed because of the accused's order adding that little paragraph about the stay of execution for twenty-four hours, and it was on that order and that order only that these fourteen men met their death by order of Probst.

"Now the interesting fact about that charge is this. The accused was interrogated at Dachau; he was seen by Colonel Scotland, who has been before you, on a number of days in June and July of this year; he made a statement to Major Terry at Dachau; he made three statements to Colonel Scotland at the London District Cage concerning this particular matter—the statement made at Dachau is marked exhibit 22, and the statements made to Colonel Scotland are exhibits 3, 6 and 8.

"Now in those statements he has dealt at great length with what he called the 'Egersund incident', and he has spoken in those statements of the conversations which he thinks he had with Probst and the telephone conversation which he had with

Keitel. He comes into this court two or three days ago and says, 'Oh no, those statements are not right; I was talking about that fourth charge, the other glider at Stavanger, and it was about that incident that I was talking to Keitel. I rang up Keitel about that after I heard about the other one.'

"You will remember that he said he heard that they had been taken prisoner but he did not know that those men in the fourth charge—or so he said the other day—had been handed over to the SD, and he was horrified to hear, after he had spoken to Keitel, that they had been handed over to the SD.

"Well, gentlemen, I am asking you to say that the story he told to Major Terry and the story he told to Colonel Scotland is the true story...."

The court presumably came to the conclusion that Falkenhorst had indeed told the true story at London Cage. On the "Egersund" charge, at all events, they found him guilty. He was also found guilty on the closely-linked charge of handing over the remaining glider prisoners to the Gestapo who murdered them.

He was found guilty, in fact, on seven of the nine counts concerning the deaths of British and Allied war prisoners, Commando troops or naval men.

On the Not Guilty side of the Falkenhorst story, one case stands out in my memory for a certain angry rebuke which I gave the General during his stay at The Cage in London. It arose out of yet another Gestapo murder, a crime for which Falkenhorst could not be blamed: the slaughter of a British "frogman" called Evans.

Evans, a petty officer, had been taken prisoner in October 1942 during an ambitious submarine operation employing special "two-man torpedoes". The target was none other than the battleship *Tirpitz* and other German capital ships. The attack failed. Most of the seamen involved succeeded in getting out of Norway, but Frogman Evans was unlucky. He was captured while trying to escape to Sweden and brought to Grini Prison, near Oslo. He was then transferred to Gestapo headquarters, where for nearly two weeks he was put on public exhibition in the vestibule of the building.

Norwegians and Germans alike were invited to inspect the

man, who was kept on display, day after day, with all his frog-man's gear neatly set out on tables. It was an altogether revolting assault on a man's dignity. Its propaganda value was neither more nor less than a crude suggestion to the effect that, "Here is a living specimen of an English saboteur, caught breaking into our country to destroy our ships in port." When the "show" was over, Evans was put to death by the Gestapo.

While the "show" was on, Falkenhorst paid a fifteen-minute visit, gazing with the rest. During his trial the General pleaded that he had "only stayed a few minutes". He had been told, he said, that "pieces of equipment had been laid out in the building, that it was very interesting and I should look at it".

When Falkenhorst came to London for interrogation I could not forbear to tell him that no power but his own indecent curiosity could have sent him to that display.

"What I hold against you," I told him, "is that you went to look at the man, and you examined his kit. Furthermore, you knew he would soon be taken away and shot like a dog at the Gestapo camp. You may not have had the power to prevent his death—but as an act of human decency you could have kept yourself from this terrible exhibition."

"I had nothing to do with it," the old man muttered, "and I only stayed a few minutes."

The court's final verdict on Nicholas von Falkenhorst: Guilty on seven of the nine charges. He was sentenced to death.

The supreme penalty was later commuted to a sentence of twenty years' imprisonment. Of course, Falkenhorst was getting to be a really old man, and not in the best of health or spirits.

I hear he was released quite recently.

Chapter Thirteen

THE KESSELRING STORY

IT was about one o'clock in the afternoon of Thursday, March 23, 1944. There was not much activity along the dusty, nondescript street called Via Rasella, in Mussolini's wartime Rome. A few bystanders, a few men and women entering or leaving their houses, a handful of Italian workers heading for the shops or the nearest *ristorante*.

A street-cleaner's grimy barrow stood unattended at the kerbside. It was a dull day. The war was in its fifth year and the Allied forces were already advancing up the leg of Italy.

One o'clock . . . As was their custom, a company of German policemen would soon be marching back to barracks from their duty stations in different parts of Rome. It was the same every day, about a hundred men, including many too old for military service, returning by way of the Via Rasella. The minutes ticked by. No one paid the slightest attention to the street-cleaner's barrow and there was no sign of its attendant.

Right on time, the column of German policemen appeared as usual at the corner of the street, wheeling into view . . . twenty, fifty, ninety, until their tramping boots made the only noise distinguishable along the Via Rasella.

On they came. The first half-dozen drew level with the cleaner's barrow standing in the gutter. No one gave it a thought. Soon, nearly half the marching Germans had passed the barrow; another sixty seconds and the column would be turning again and the Via Rasella would once more be quiet. Then, suddenly, there was chaos and uproar. The clatter of boots was drowned by the thunder of a great explosion—and all at once the road was strewn with bodies. In the space of a few seconds the whole contingent of Germans lay dead or wounded among rubble from the houses nearest the blast. Italians were among the victims too.



Left: At a war-time concert in Norway. Third from right (front row), General von Falkenhorst. Next to him, wearing glasses, the ex-gauleiter, Terboven. On his right, Vidkun Quisling.

Right: General Mason-Macfarlane, British Director of Military Intelligence up to the fall of France, 1940.



Left: General Hackwell-Smith, President of the British Military Court, arriving in Venice for the Kesselring trial.



Ex-S.S. General Karl Oberg (left), known as the Butcher of Paris, and Helmuth Knochen, his former assistant.

Below : Major-General William Biddle (left) after decorating the Author with the American Bronze Star.



When the ambulances came they found more than a hundred casualties. And soon, among the less badly hurt survivors who were lucky enough to have been on the fringe of the explosion, they also found a few who could talk.

The blast, they said, had come from a street-cleaner's barrow.

And so it had. The full story came to light when the street was cleared and the ground investigated. That harmless-looking garbage vehicle had been packed with dynamite controlled by a time fuse. It was set to explode at the precise minute when the marching column of German policemen was due to pass through the Via Rasella on their daily trek to barracks.

One more blow had been struck by the anti-German saboteurs of the Italian partisan gangs. Thirty-three of the German police were killed, sixty injured. Later that day, a conference took place between Police General Maelzer, the German administrative commander in Rome, and Colonel Kappler, the German SD security chief for the capital.

They discussed what should be done in the way of reprisals against the Italian populace. For many months the Germans in Italy had been severely harassed by partisan warfare, which had grown to such a pitch that harsh measures were being adopted to deal with sabotage and partisan killings. Already the Germans had announced that reprisals in the ratio of ten Italians for each dead German would in future be executed. It was a ruthless but, it should be noted, not in itself an illegal reprisal decree under international law.

Ten Italians for each dead German; and there were thirty-three dead Germans in the Via Rasella. That meant 330 Italians to be put to death by shooting.

When the news of the explosion reached General von Mackensen, who as commander of the 14th Army had Rome inside his area, he was plainly perturbed. He was interested in ensuring that Rome should not turn into a totally hostile camp in the heart of his region, although technically he had no rights inside the capital. Field-Marshal Albert Kesselring, the senior German general in Italy, had already declared Rome an "open city". There were no military formations in the capital, and neither Kesselring nor von Mackensen had any direct commitments there. The place was controlled by Kappler and his SD

forces, with General Maelzer as the local chief of supplies, administration and suchlike.

Von Mackensen, at all events, demanded that Kappler should come to his headquarters outside Rome to explain precisely what action was to be taken. Kappler duly attended upon the General and assured him that the reprisal would be fulfilled by selecting criminals who were being held in his own SD prisons—criminals who had either been sentenced to death or were guilty of offences serious enough to be “worthy” of suffering the death penalty. Later, on the telephone, Kappler also informed Field-Marshal Kesselring about this proposed arrangement.

If there were doubts and hesitations in Rome, however, there were certainly none at Berchtesgaden, where Hitler and Himmler discussed the news of the outrage in the Via Rasella.

The Fuehrer’s pronouncement was brief and ruthless. Not only was the ten to one reprisal figure to be applied but the doomed Italians must die within twenty-four hours. To this was added a further flash from Himmler declaring that the reprisals would be carried out by his SD security forces—which, in Rome, meant Colonel Kappler.

Now the stage was set for the act of revenge. Kappler’s next job was to gather up his intended victims. He took 214 people from his SD gaols and four from the condemned cells. A further sixty were supplied from local Italian prisons. But when the count was made, Kappler observed that he had only 278 Italians to place on his death list—just fifty-two short of the required reprisal total. So, after obtaining the permission of his SD superior, General Harster, he took fifty-seven Jews—completely innocent of any crime—who were held in the Rome concentration camp, adding their names to his roll and making a total of 335. The inclusion of an extra five Jewish victims appears to have been the result of some clerical error.

Kappler spent the next few hours making energetic efforts to spread the responsibility for the mass reprisal. He applied to von Mackensen’s headquarters for the “loan” of German Army troops to carry out the shootings. The request was firmly rejected. So the fearful Hitler-Himmler decree had to be performed by Kappler and his own security staff. He discovered

that army commanders were refusing even to supply him with guards to shut off the districts where shootings might be carried out under security conditions. Having reached this impasse, he decided there was nothing for it but to treat the whole reprisal operation as a State secret affair.

Italians going about their business in the capital next morning might have wondered, though certainly they could not guess, about the destination of some large lorries that were speeding towards the outskirts of Rome, each vehicle carrying some two dozen of their fellow-countrymen. These were the victims, and in this fashion the 335 were driven out of Rome to the deserted district of the famous Ardeatine Caves. Sixty officers and men of the SD, with Kappler in charge, conducted the operation.

It was past noon when they reached the Caves. First, Kappler ordered his men to sort out the prisoners in small batches. Then, at a given signal, the first group of about six men were prodded into the nearest cave. Once inside the damp dungeon, the six were made to kneel. The SD men then drew their automatic pistols and shot them at point-blank range. Six more unfortunates came to join their fellows, and six more went into the next cave. Kappler went around the groups ensuring that each member of the SD team fulfilled the task of shooting his allotted quota of Italians.

When the terrible deed was done, Kappler called for cases of explosives which had been brought in one of his lorries. The entrances to the caves were then blown in. And the curtain of death was finally closed by building brick walls to seal them off completely. By early evening the executioners were on their way back to the city.

Having called the killings a State secret, and having sealed the gruesome evidence of the Ardeatine Caves, Kappler assumed that he had achieved the secrecy needed for his own future safety in the Italian capital. Yet despite his security efforts there appeared, some time later, a story in a Rome newspaper revealing that an atrocity had been committed by German forces against innocent Italians. Straight away, the chief intelligence officer on Kesselring's staff, a Colonel Zolling, was sent to Rome to investigate, or more precisely to obtain a complete report on the reprisal action of March 24. Zolling's mission

appears to have been a failure, however, for he reported that Kappler had declined to supply the information.

The secret of the Ardeatine Caves was safely preserved . . . at least for a while.

State secrecy, of course, was precisely what turned the Ardeatine operation into a brutal crime, quite apart from the grisly nature of the method employed. Reprisal measures and the shooting of hostages, even harsh reprisals in such a ratio as ten to one, would not have been in the legal sense a crime of war *provided* they were legally carried out and properly publicised to the population as a warning of the punishments that might follow any further outrages against the Germans by Italian partisan fighters. But making a State secret of the Ardeatine killings defeated the whole object of this punishment by reprisal.

With the end of the war in Italy, Britain became deeply involved with investigating the countless complaints made by the Italians against their old friends and allies the Germans. In due course a vast mass of evidence was being paraded; before long the story of the Ardeatine shootings was disclosed, and the caves were unsealed.

It was not till the end of 1945 and the early weeks of the New Year, however, that the real sifting of material could begin. At our London Cage headquarters, where war crimes enquiries were already forging ahead, I was handed a mountain of miscellaneous evidence and statements concerning alleged atrocities against Italians during the time of the German retreat. I was also warned that a number of senior German officers would shortly be arriving at The Cage from Italy, and it would be my task to interrogate them.

Senior officers, they said. I woke up one morning to find I had five German generals on my hands. They were all Regular Army men (among them a former Rhodes Scholar) who had served in Italy under Field-Marshal Kesselring as area or divisional commanders. Upon learning that each had controlled a region where crimes by the German army were alleged, I introduced them to what became my well-known practice at The Cage when dealing with either witnesses or suspected war

criminals. It was always fascinating to observe the Germans' reactions to my simple suggestion, "Go away and write it all down in your own words." A few of our prisoners, faced with this order, barely disguised the thought that they found me faintly mad. Others were plainly puzzled. Many snatched at the idea as a golden opportunity for absolving themselves of all guilt—and, whenever possible, incriminating their ex-comrades. And yet another variety, wretched, broken in spirit, or merely knowing that the game was up, would take up the pen to confess their crimes in remarkable detail.

The five German generals, of whom only one was likely to face a charge, were at first wholly nonplussed by the technique. They settled down, however, as soon as they appreciated my efforts to establish a thoroughly friendly atmosphere, and before long I noticed they were working with the diligence of students preparing for exams. I had given them a single large room and a typewriter. They stayed for some six weeks, each man producing his own story of events in Italy during those vital months when the Allied campaign was moving gradually but successfully onward.

Then came the first of the bigger fry among the Germans from Italy—General von Mackensen (his father was the celebrated field-marshal of the 1914-18 war), who had served under Kesselring as commander of the important 14th Army. He wrote an exceedingly frank statement of all that had happened in that fateful week of March 1944. The whole object of his intervention, he told me, was to try to restrain the ruthlessness of the SD.

When I had finished reading his story I felt sorry for the man. There had been no soldiers in Rome. Even his headquarters lay outside the city. And I now knew enough of those complex happenings in Italy and of the Himmler-dominated scheme for stripping the German Army commanders of their authority, to realise that men like von Mackensen were far more remote from responsibility for what went on in Mussolini's capital than many others who were likely to go scot-free.

Such matters, however, were none of my business, and I told von Mackensen: "Judging by the evidence we have collected, together with the statement you've just compiled, I think I'd

better warn you, General, that you will probably have to face a war crimes trial court."

His reaction was unexpected. He sprang from his chair at my desk, stood stiffly to attention and gazed, unseeing, at the wall above my head. There was something vaguely melodramatic about the silence that followed, yet it was impressive and full of dignity too. Then, at last, the ageing general spoke. All he could say was: "Thank God my father no longer lives." It was like some ghostly cry from one of Germany's military aristocrats of old.

A few weeks later I was receiving at London Cage that "senior officer" I eventually came to regard as the most blameless of all German army leaders who ever set foot in wartime Italy: the man we called "Kessie". Now I was face to face with Albert Kesselring, the correct, proud, too proud, field-marshal who was soon to become the scapegoat *par excellence*, branded as chief criminal among the Germans in Italy, and convicted by a British military court for crimes which, to say the least, were no proper concern of Britain's.

I liked "Kessie's" personality from the start. Having allotted him a single room at The Cage, overlooking Bayswater Road, I told one of my sergeants: "Bring the Field-Marshal along as soon as you've searched him, and I'll be there to receive him."

A few minutes later when Kesselring entered his room I was somewhat startled by the quantity of the luggage he had brought—several bags and cases and three bulky overcoats carried loose. I had already provided him with two sizeable tables, but seeing all the gear, I said: "You'd better have another table to lay out your stuff."

Kesselring hastily apologised. "Please don't trouble with more tables," he said. "If perhaps I could have two or three hooks, or even a few nails . . ."

I looked sharply at the Field-Marshal, with a mock frown. Then I turned to my sergeant. "Nails and hooks? To hang in a prisoner's room? What do you think, sergeant . . . ?"

Kesselring caught the point, and was roaring with laughter as soon as he saw the sergeant's broad grin.

Later that day, he opened our first discussion by coming to the main issue more directly and more good-humouredly than

any German I had interrogated before or after him. With his big square frame almost blocking the window in my room at The Cage, he gazed reflectively at the trees outside before accepting the chair I proffered. Then, slowly, he sat, placing both hands on his knees, leaning forward to pose his question—with a smile that was a little more than half serious.

"Tell me, Colonel Scotland," he began, "do *you* believe I am a criminal?"

"Now that's an improper question," I told him, "and I think you deserve only one answer." Mildly intrigued, he gave me an expectant glance but said nothing.

"As a German," I went on, "of course you're a criminal. You lost the war!"

At once Kesselring relaxed, laughed quietly and nodded his agreement with a point that needed no elaboration. For a moment, my mind went back to South Africa and the lessons I had learned forty years earlier. It was the old Zulu chiefs who had held that odd philosophy, curing all problems of victory and defeat in war by solemnly killing off those who had lost the battle. And I began wondering whether Kesselring, of all our German suspects, might not be facing an unjust ritual, no more concerned with war crimes than the chieftains whose sole crime lay in losing *their* wars.

Over the next month or so I spent a good deal of time with Albert Kesselring. He was given a variety of documents to study, including the statements made by his five generals and other Germans; and armed with this material he settled down for three weeks to put his own case on paper. He wrote a lengthy story, relating the history of activity in the Italian war theatre from the time of the Allied landing in Sicily to the time of his own transfer back to Germany, where he replaced von Rundstedt as Western commander in 1945.

Each day I would call upon him in his room, where we would spend from four till six in the afternoon discussing the statements. Sometimes he would read me what he had written that day; and sometimes I would ask him to amplify the descriptions of his rôle and operations in Italy.

By the time Kesselring had completed these somewhat grim literary efforts it was clear that he, like von Mackensen, would

have a serious charge to answer in court. Yet when I told him one day that I thought he would have to prepare himself for a trial, he was utterly astounded.

"I don't think that I . . . that you have any right to put me in court," he stammered.

Suddenly I realised that he was confidently assuming that his statements had made his position in Italy crystal-clear—so clear, in fact, that there would be no case for him to answer. To all this I could say nothing. The legal side of war crimes investigation was no business of mine; all decisions and preparations for trials were the responsibility of the department we called JAG—the Judge Advocate General. To Kesselring, therefore, all I could offer was a shrug, and a mumbled, "Sorry, but I think you'll find that's the position. . . ."

By this time I was suffering from a kind of amazed impatience, for I now knew that if ever a man's exaggerated sense of his own importance was leading him to his doom, that man was Kesselring.

The fact is that proud Kesselring insisted on calling himself Commander-in-Chief of all German forces in Italy, although in truth he was, by 1944, nothing of the kind. Much as he might dislike the notion, he was merely an officer on Mussolini's staff—true, the highest-ranking German soldier serving in Italy, but all the same, far from supreme in the matter of executive powers.

To understand his case it is essential to give the most careful study not only to these domestic conflicts of power and responsibility, but also to what may be termed the shape of the German hierarchy in Italy. In contrast to von Falkenhorst who, in occupied Norway, was undoubtedly the responsible C.-in-C. (answerable, what is more, directly to Hitler), Kesselring's authority in Italy had been virtually confined by 1944 to the realm of fighting the enemy; while the power of Himmler's SS and SD police forces under the supreme control of General Karl Wollf (Himmler's deputy in Italy) was growing ever stronger.

Let us look briefly at the two leading personalities involved. There was Kesselring, called "senior executive officer", appointed by the OKW in Berlin (Germany's war ministry,

headed by Keitel) and reporting directly to the Army High Command. In effect he was master of all the fighting forces on the ground while they were in contact with the enemy or within his zone of operations.

Then there was the SS and Police General Karl Wolff, whom I also interrogated at London Cage. As Himmler's "shadow" in Italy, Wolff was supreme boss of all police and security forces as well as administrative controller of the SS units. He also succeeded later to the title of General Plenipotentiary, a post that put him in charge of supplies, communications and all troops in reserve or in training. In theory, Wolff was junior in rank to Kesselring, the so-called Commander-in-Chief, but in practice he was a law unto himself.

A highly significant climax for these two was reached in March 1944, when Kesselring issued a general direction on the conduct of warfare against the Italian partisans. Wolff straightaway objected to this order, and the argument was referred to Berlin, where Himmler and Keitel reached a curious agreement designed to settle the matter.

This ruling from Berlin—an order "regarding the responsibility for fighting partisans in Italy"—was conveyed to Kesselring on the first of May in a telegram bearing Keitel's signature.

It opened with a firm declaration that "the highest leadership" in partisan warfare was held by Kesselring. It continued with the extraordinary declaration that in accordance with Kesselring's policy the man responsible for conducting partisan warfare was . . . Wolff. It went on to declare that Wolff's authority excluded the territory of Kesselring's actual military operations, together with a coastal zone thirty kilometres in depth beyond those operations. And it ended on the superbly contradictory note that the policy to be carried out would be laid down by . . . Wolff.

The implication was plain to everyone but Albert Kesselring. He was being told: we will call you the master, but take note that Wolff is the absolute head of his own house. Kesselring, in short, was responsible for an area of precisely thirty kilometres beyond his battle zone. And except in this zone, partisan warfare became classified as a police operation.

It was one more step towards paring down the power of German Army commanders, a logical outcome, moreover, of the happenings in Germany itself. Hitler had long since lost faith in the Army leadership and was fast encouraging the voracious Himmler to gain increasing control.

Just why it was that Britain after the war concerned herself with the indictment of Germans in Italy is a mystery I have never been able to fathom. To this day I remain convinced that our intervention was unnecessary, unjust and wholly untenable. We were standing on the borderline between two European allies, Italy and Germany, striving to allocate the blame for a series of crimes committed by one nation against the other at a time when both were at war with Britain. Into the legal fray, nevertheless, we hurled our energies.

So far as the Rome affair was concerned, we knew that it had been a case of Germans being killed by Italians, and of Italians being killed in revenge by Germans. And at Rome and Venice during 1946 and 1947, five members of a British military court—five ordinary, if high-ranking, British soldiers—were called upon to decide the rights, wrongs and degrees of guilt.

At the Rome trial of von Mackensen and General Maelzer, both were found guilty of participation in the reprisal killings of March 1944. Kesselring gave evidence, in vain, on behalf of his subordinates. Both were sentenced to death, then reprieved, but awarded life imprisonment, and both released a few years later.

The main event in this strange postwar drama of retribution, which brought no credit to Britain, was reserved for Venice. There, in the old Venetian courthouse on the Grand Canal, Kesselring's trial began in February 1947. Tortuous and often sadly ill-informed, it rambled on for more than three months.

Today, in any re-assessment of guilt arising from the Second World War, the Kesselring Case holds a strong claim for priority consideration. There were two charges against him. On Count 1, that he was a party to the shooting of the 335 Italians in the Ardeatine Caves near Rome; on Count 2, that he was similarly concerned with orders which incited troops under his command to murder civilians during anti-partisan operations from June to August 1944.

As in other trials, my rôle was to present the accused's written statements to the court, and appear as a witness for the prosecution. The prosecutor was again Colonel Halse. For each day's hearing we travelled up the Grand Canal from the old Danielli Palace (our hotel) to the long, narrow, sombre-looking courthouse which lay between the fish and vegetable markets.

Poor Kesselring! He pleaded not guilty and then went pell-mell into an attitude that was far more likely to achieve his conviction than establish his innocence. As I had feared, he confused the court by his insistence that he had been at all material times Commander-in-Chief, in fact as well as in name, of all the German forces.

The entire case against him hung on this vital question of "responsibility", and it seemed to me that his strangely self-incriminating behaviour could only be explained by a profound feeling of injured pride.

It was a bizarre situation for me, too. Of the five documents I presented to the court, the most crucial was that Berlin telegram in which Keitel had defined the limitations of Kesselring's powers. Aware of the thickening fog that was growing round this most vital of clues to the German chain of command, I felt myself impelled to insist that Kesselring was assuming an authority he had never possessed.

At one stage I must have sounded more like a faithful witness for the defence than an instrument of prosecution. It happened when I went into the witness box to explain the Keitel telegram and to face a barrage of questions on the subject from the Judge Advocate.

Was it my opinion, asked the J.A., that Kesselring was not the Commander-in-Chief of all German forces in Italy? I replied that this was precisely my view, emphasising that Kesselring wielded his baton of responsibility only over those forces inside the thirty-kilometre zone to which Keitel had referred.

Kesselring, at any rate, derived neither comfort nor legal benefit from my affirmations. It occurred to me that if his defence counsel had only grasped the true significance of the Keitel telegram as the most precious document in court, they might conceivably have succeeded in striking a somewhat

brighter, stronger note in his favour. I could only reflect that defence counsel the world over must by nature be suspicious of the breed known as Witness for the Prosecution.

For one startling episode [referred to in Chapter One] the defence were certainly unprepared, though I should add that I, too, was a trifle shaken by it. The tall, bluff prosecutor, Colonel Halse, was enquiring whether I knew who had been Germany's General Plenipotentiary in Italy.

"Now, Colonel Scotland, I am going to ask you some questions about the German Army . . ." he began

But Halse got no further, for it was at this point that Dr. Hans Laternser, one of Kesselring's two defenders, sprang to his feet in protest. "I object to the question," he cried in considerable agitation, "and to any answer to it. The witness was never in the German Army, and cannot give evidence about its organisation."

Several seconds of tension and silence enveloped the entire courtroom. Then came the exchanges that were soon to be headlined in newspapers throughout the world.

HALSE: Colonel Scotland—were you ever in the German Army?

SCOTLAND: Yes.

HALSE: Was information on the German Army your function during the war?

SCOTLAND: Yes.

The newspapermen lost no time. I have related in Chapter One the story of my transformation into "Britain's Master Spy" . . . "M.I.5 Colonel on Nazi General Staff" . . . and so forth.

In Venice the next day, however, I decided to nip firmly in the bud any further imaginative efforts at spreading the notion that I had served in Hitler's Army. True enough, I had been a German officer . . . but that was from 1903 to 1907, during the Hottentot Wars in South-West Africa. True, also, I had secretly and successfully fooled the Germans and worked behind their lines . . . but that was alongside the Kaiser's army, in 1916. And during the Second World War it was unquestionably my function to deal with information on the German forces.

All this I decided to disclose, and to Halse I promptly

announced that I would like to call a Press conference for the purpose. We agreed on this move, and straightaway laid plans to meet correspondents at the end of the week.

On the eve of that meeting came a surprise order from Whitehall. It told me, in effect: "Say nothing. Let the story rip." I have never discovered the official reason for this intriguing ban.

Kesselring was found guilty on all counts. It was an absurd decision, made shameful by the death sentence then pronounced. Like von Mackensen, he was later reprieved and despatched to Werl Prison in Germany to serve a life sentence.

I was interested to observe that when Kesselring came to write his memoirs he told of his month spent "in the well-known Kensington Cage where Colonel Scotland held the sceptre. There are various opinions about the Cage, but personally I was treated with remarkable consideration. My almost daily interviews with Colonel Scotland brought us closer together and helped me to realise his fairmindedness. In fact, he took it on him to move strongly for my release."

For myself, I count it a privilege to have played some part in gaining him his freedom, an act of clemency performed towards the end of 1952. Yet is there not, even now, some missing thread in this story of the Kesselring Case? What happened, it may be asked, to that seemingly culpable servant of the German SD, Colonel Kappler, who led the shooting squad in the fearful killings of 335 Italians? He was not tried by the British Military Court but handed over to the Italians, who put him on trial in October 1948 . . . fifteen months after Kesselring's conviction and sentence.

Kappler did not deny his part in the Ardeatine affair. When questioned, his response was wonderfully simple: "The order came from Hitler."

The Italian court went on to produce a last act which turned tragedy into farce. They found that the great reprisal (ten Italians for each dead German) was a perfectly legal order in international law. They calculated correctly that since thirty-three Germans were killed by Italians, a tenfold reprisal figure should total 330.

They therefore found Kappler not guilty of murder in the case of 330 out of the 335 Italians who met their deaths under Hitler's order on that bleak March day in 1944.

They found him guilty only in respect of the excess five.

The verdict, somehow, seemed to mock the British assessment of Albert Kesselring's "crimes".

Chapter Fourteen

THE FUTURE OF "THE SECRET SERVICE"

AFTER spending all but a few of the past fifty years in the study and practice of "Intelligence" and "Security" techniques, I have been fascinated, and at times a trifle alarmed, to observe a recent sharpening of public interest in the organisation of secret affairs.

How well equipped are Britain's secret services to meet the needs of today? Bald questions on these lines have become, especially since 1950, a strangely popular basis for discussion, not only in Press and Parliament, but even in that busy national debating chamber—the saloon bar.

In one respect they alarm me. Any tendency to bring before the public gaze the names and photographed faces of Intelligence officers will hardly be conducive to effective operations by men whose duties in a so-called "secret" service should remain . . . in a word, secret.

Nevertheless, I am convinced that this developing curiosity is concerned with something more, something deeper, than the old fictional magic of Mata Hari-like pursuits, of spy dramas and secret formulae, of stolen blueprints and gaudy undercover operators in international espionage. Rather does it reflect a widespread feeling of public disquiet, based on recent episodes about which at least a few morsels of the truth, if not the whole, have become known. And this expression of disquiet is wholly genuine despite the flimsy character of the knowledge that lies behind it.

The reasons for public concern are not hard to find. In the space of a few years, this country has been startled by incidents suggesting that all is not well with a security system that looks as if it might easily be caught napping. Into the spotlight, in

rapid succession, came the activities of Dr. Alan Nunn-May; the machinations of the Harwell scientist Bruno Pontecorvo; the protracted career of spying freely indulged by Klaus Fuchs; above all, the dangerous antics and flight to Moscow of those unreliable diplomats, Donald Maclean and Guy Burgess; and, yet more recently, the case of "Frogman" Lionel Crabb, whose dive into Portsmouth Harbour during the 1956 visit to Britain of a Soviet warship was followed by his dramatic disappearance and a spate of official explanatory blunders. These cases are merely the notorious symbols of a number of basic shortcomings to be discovered in Britain's security network.

In our fast-moving industrial world of technical achievement, of atomic research, supersonic air speeds, electronic control systems and automatic processes of production, two significant developments are nowadays taking place. First, there are today *more secrets* to be guarded than ever before. Secondly, there are *more people* concerned with secret information than at any other time in history.

Let us consider what this implies in terms of present-day national security. In Britain, security is chiefly guarded by two specialised investigating units: the Special Branch of Scotland Yard, dealing with civilians, and the War Office department called M.I.5, dealing with the armed forces.

(The reader at this stage might as well be warned against being too much influenced by the highly-romanticised reputation of M.I.5. There has been for many years a distinctly wild tendency to associate M.I.5 with any and every type of Intelligence or security work. For example, although I have never in my life been employed by the department, I have found myself often described in newspaper reports as "M.I.5 Man", or, yet more excitingly, "Scotland of M.I.5". Endowed with irresistible glamour, the term is admittedly more suggestive of drama and intrigue than, say, "Official of the War Office Legal Branch". But the fact is that like all other branches of the Military Intelligence Service, M.I.5 has a limited range of activity. Its officers, who happen to belong to the fifth department of the service, are merely one important group among several specialised Intelligence sections.)

The tasks of security in Britain are also handled—in small

packages, so to speak—by a variety of other authorities. Government departments each have their own small corner of security work, though none carries a large staff for this purpose. For obvious reasons, the departments most likely to be interested in security matters are the Foreign Office, the Ministry of Supply and the Ministry of Defence.

All in all, it is a piecemeal method of operation. And when, in recent times, the system has broken down or been in some way defeated, I have found it difficult to avoid the suspicion that the real trouble may be due to lack of effective co-ordination at the topmost levels.

There is another drawback to our present system—the implications of ministerial responsibility. In matters affecting Government departments, I firmly believe that security services are bound to be imperilled so long as Ministers of the Government continue in a position where they must carry the ultimate blame for security errors.

The House of Commons is not the place where security should be discussed, with Ministers forced into defending their action (or inaction). There are many security matters, especially those bound up with enquiries into the behaviour of a suspected individual, which by their very nature must be kept secret.

If a man is suspected of spying, or of being in any way undesirable as a security risk, he must clearly become the subject of an adverse report at one stage or another. But under present conditions there is the ever-lurking fear of a Parliamentary rumpus if a mistake should be made. In such circumstances it would hardly be surprising if action were delayed, or none taken.

How, then, could this condition be improved? The most effective method might well be found by the creation of a Security High Command, permanent, non-political and non-departmental in character. Such a body—possibly a part of the establishment of the Lord Chancellor—should be given the power to advise and investigate in all "high-ranking" matters of national security, and to examine all cases of subversive activity which cannot satisfactorily be dealt with at lower levels.

Among its important functions would be to consider reports on the activities of suspected persons. Its work would not be

subject to scrutiny and questioning in Parliament, and for this reason alone the responsible heads of departments in the Government service would at least be enabled to ask for guidance or put forward confidential reports under conditions of absolute secrecy.

The Security Command would not confine itself, however, to cases affecting the personnel of Government departments. It would also embrace the security risks of industrial establishments, especially in high-level cases where matters of the top-most secrecy are in question.

In no case concerning the security of the nation would action be taken without prior consultation with the Security Command, into whose hands would be placed every scrap of available information or evidence, together with the opportunity for interviewing the accused person or persons as well as the informants.

What would be the safeguards for the individual under this system of efficient probing where all is hidden from the public view? The Security Command would be no Star Chamber. It would fulfil the functions of a court of appeal—indeed, the highest appeal authority in the land—for persons suspected of subversive activity, whether in industry or Government service. There would be no question of threats to personal freedom and integrity through unproven or irresponsible allegations. Any man interviewed by Security Command would be fully informed of the case against him and of any decisions to be taken. And in cases where a suspect becomes completely cleared, the findings would be made known without delay.

A nation's security is, above all, bound up with the behaviour of people—with individuals, their actions, ideals, patriotism, foolishness or selfish ambition. And secrecy, as I say, is often imperative in investigating these facets of a man or woman who may—or may not—be guilty of working against the interests of their country. True, secrecy must never become the cloak for injustice, but secrecy must also never be permitted to cloak inaction and inefficiency; the risks are too substantial to tolerate a method of handling enquiries which may end in disastrous success for the efforts of traitors and spies.

In the saga of Burgess and Maclean, here were two Foreign Office employees whose behaviour was known in Foreign Office circles to be suspect. Yet no action was taken until the day was too late. The Burgess-Maclean case offers perhaps the most outstanding argument since the war in favour of that Security Command whose functions I have briefly outlined.

I can, of course, foresee the charge of "McCarthyism" being levelled at this notion of a supreme security authority. Such an accusation, I submit, would suggest a total failure to understand both the functions of the scheme suggested for Britain and the nature of McCarthyism in the United States.

In the U.S., Senator McCarthy's flamboyant methods have been characterised, as is now well known, by intimidation and the technique of the "smear". But more than that: the full spotlight of publicity has been directed on the proceedings of his Un-American Activities Committee. This method seems to me to be the very negation of the intelligent approach to security procedure so far as it involves an investigation into individual cases. It is, happily, a method unlikely to make notable headway in Britain.

No, there is little prospect of televised, broadcast, commented and otherwise advertised circuses on the lines of an Un-British Activities Committee. For Britain I believe the danger is different—and possibly more to be feared. Not McCarthyism (which is really a parade of *political* interrogation), but Himmlerism (which in this context may be defined as an *attitude*) could easily become the threat to justice for the individual who finds himself embroiled in thorny problems of national security.

In the necessary processes of investigating the activities of people who may be looked upon as "security risks", there is clearly a danger of victimising the innocent, unless stringent care is taken to ensure justice in the method. Today, in Britain, we might profitably take warning from the lessons of Nazi Germany. There, the Himmler technique for dealing with Germans who for any reason were suspect on security grounds (including even the "gossiping type") was no public exhibition of the probe into a man's integrity or reliability. Instead, the suspect, innocent or guilty, was quietly removed from his post.

No explanations were given, neither to the victim nor to his professional or industrial colleagues and friends. The Himmler method, in short, was an example of secrecy without individual safeguards. It was simple, convenient, ruthless—and unjust.

The effort to preserve security, therefore, must not be permitted to fall into the error of “quiet dismissals”, using security as a mere excuse for secrecy. That is the essence of Himmlerism. It could be sensibly avoided by the appeal court machinery which would become an integral part of the Security Command authority I would like to envisage for Britain.

The real birth of modern Military Intelligence goes back to the grandiose days of the Indian Empire. In order to maintain security in so vast a country, a handful of British officials and a small body of troops were compelled to develop a highly-efficient information system with a well-organised network of tested, trusted agents operating throughout the continent.

One wonders whether Britain’s secret services were ever again to achieve such fruitful operations. By 1914 the concept of Military Intelligence had deteriorated to the extent of our boasting a few German-speaking staff officers. There was a deplorable absence of Intelligence men trained and ready for the field, and the value of prisoner-of-war interrogation had hardly begun to be appreciated.

Nevertheless, by the end of the First World War our Intelligence Corps was well established and looked like providing the basis for a hopeful future. That, however, was a brief dream, for the Corps was foolishly axed and disbanded—and by 1939, facing another world war, British Intelligence was in worse shape than ever before. The shortage of trained men continued throughout the service, right down to the day of victory.

As commanding officer of the War Crimes Investigation Unit, I was nearing the end of a lengthy career towards the end of 1948, with the last of the trials due to take place at Hamburg. For three years we had probed, interrogated, searched half Europe and produced tens of thousands of words to place before the courts. It had been a momentous period.

We were all civilians in uniform—men who in our day-to-day

business lives had experienced close contacts with Germany and the Germans. One of my most capable officers in the unit was a Belgian-born newspaperman who spoke French, German and English to perfection. Others were ex-students of German universities. There was a German-born officer who had long since settled in England; there was a civil servant and a bank clerk; and all became markedly expert in various branches of our work. Journalists and former university students were especially well informed, and many possessed an impressive familiarity not only with the social, political and economic affairs of the enemy but with all the German dialects.

For myself, there was the eternal advantage of having served in the German Army, of intimate professional and business contacts stretching over nearly forty years, together with a general knowledge of German soldiers, officers and tradesmen of every kind—builders, electricians, blacksmiths, farmers, clerks, carpenters and many others. It was easy for me, therefore, to talk on equal terms with most Germans, including the businessman.

More than once in this narrative I have emphasised the inestimable value of those personal, voluntary statements in writing which, as part of my interrogation processes at London Cage, played a major part in the trials of German war criminals. Yet I suspect that the psychological importance of this method is not easily apparent to the average Englishman. *Write your own story in your own words. . . .* It sounds simple enough, but in fact the device is deceptively obvious.

When the Englishman makes a verbal statement to the police, it rarely, if ever, enters his head that his words may be twisted or changed by the man in the blue uniform with his little notebook and patient pencil. We trust our policemen as no other nation does. But I learned long, long ago that such faith in police integrity does not hold good the wide world over. In the South African bush territories, during the first decade of the century, I occasionally acted as a voluntary interpreter at local magistrates' courts. And there I saw how many an accused man would refute the statement he was reported to have made to the police. "I never said that", or "The words were put into my mouth", or "I deny making any such comment". Even

today, in many parts of Europe, protests of this kind are common enough.

When our war crime suspects began arriving at London Cage, it seemed to me that the entire investigation might well be imperilled unless I found some method of ensuring that accused men and witnesses would stick by their statements when they were finally brought into court. It was to meet this vital need that I inaugurated our Cage system for approaching the Germans. "There is only one way to get this man effectively into court," I would tell my unit officers. "Put him in a room by himself; give him pencil, paper and all the time he needs to write his own version of the crime . . . let him sign his document, and there'll be no denials when the final day of reckoning comes."

One thing, of course, I had not bargained for when the Hamburg trials came along—the campaign of lies and allegations of ill-treatment produced by certain of our choicest Gestapo prisoners. This, among other factors, convinced me more strongly than ever before that a fundamental blunder had been made in the approach to the final settlement of the war crimes account.

By choice and training I was above all else an Intelligence man—an officer belonging to that security-minded force which stands at the very heart of what is termed the Secret Service. The basic error in the pattern of war crimes investigation lay in turning an Intelligence officer into a blend of policeman and lawyer.

As head of a unit which was perhaps unique in its experience of interrogation, not to mention its knowledge of Germany and the Germans, I saw that there was good reason for taking part in the massive postwar task of bringing the criminals to justice. But from the Intelligence viewpoint, it was a lapse of logical and tactical judgment, equalled only by the error of sending me into the war crimes courtroom to be questioned, harassed and accused and placed in a glare of publicity to which no Intelligence officer should be subjected.

At the end of it all, when at least a few of the criminals were on their way to paying the penalty, I reflected that at the age of nearly seventy I was not yet finished with my student days.

Near the turn of the century I had set out to study the German people. As part of the process of training in the arts of Intelligence, I tried, in a sense, to become "one of them". In South Africa before the First World War the Germans had gaoled me as a spy. Even the months of incarceration became just one more fruitful period of learning.

Yet nowadays, when I am asked where, if not in England, I would choose to pass the rest of my inquisitive life, the answer is never in doubt: "Right in the heart of renascent Germany."

Once an Intelligence man, always . . .

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